

**ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND THE GLOBAL
RISK ENVIRONMENT: A CASE STUDY OF
RISK AND RISK PERCEPTION IN THE
TOURIST-DEPENDENT TOWNSHIP OF
AKAROA**

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Abstract

This thesis is about global catastrophic risks and the conscious effect of such risks at the level of everyday life. Utilising R. D. Laing's concept of "ontological security", this thesis questions the extent to which risks that loom in the global environment cause a sense of ontological *insecurity* amongst individuals at the local-level. In addressing this question, this thesis responds to the theories of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens who maintain that the contemporary age is marked both by the emergence of global risks that exist as the unintended consequences of modernisation and a greater *sense* of risk owing to how information about such risks is disseminated by the media. While no objection is made to the argument that the global environment has become more objectively threatening, this thesis questions whether individuals in fact *perceive* such threat in their daily lives. This argument rests on the view that global risks, in the main, lack a tangible dimension needed to elicit a sense of urgency.

Seeking to ground the risk literature from the level of theoretical abstraction to that of lived experience, this thesis presents a case study of how risk is perceived in the tourist-dependent township of Akaroa. Despite the fact that New Zealand is generally seen as "safe" and "secure" and removed from the vicissitudes of global events, its economic reliance on international tourism ensures a susceptibility to external forces that disrupt global tourism flows. Given the recent publicity as to how such risks as climate change and peak oil may undermine international tourism in New Zealand, it is clear that areas that are particularly reliant on the international visitor market, like Akaroa, are significantly exposed to global events. This not only makes Akaroa an ideal case study in which to establish the extent to which global risks undermine ontological security in daily life, it also helps measure how seriously individuals in tourist-dependent areas consider the possibility of a substantial tourist decline.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Debate

The world is permeated by risk. There are risks of crime and disease of which we are constantly reminded in the media. There are risks associated with the food we eat, with fears over the safety of additives and pesticides entering the food chain. There are of course other risks such as those associated with health, employment and family. Most significant to this thesis, however, is an entirely different category of risk: *global risks*. As opposed to general day-to-day risks, global risks are those which transcend geographical boundaries and whose catastrophic potential is so vast as to have the power to cause wide scale devastation. Repeatedly, news stories on television, in newspapers and on the internet remind us of risks such as climate change, a global influenza pandemic, terrorism and others. However, such risks seldom impose their presence on people's daily lives, perhaps making them seem unworthy of attention. This is potentially troublesome as it may lead individuals to ignore, and thus be unprepared for, possible future scenarios. In an age where global risks are gaining an increasing degree of media attention, this raises an important question: to what extent does the threat presented by global risks affect individuals at the level of everyday life?

The question of how the threat presented by global risks affects individuals at the daily level leads to the introduction of another concept central to this thesis: "ontological security". In essence, when considering how people are consciously affected by risks, of primary interest is their sense of personal wellbeing, which is precisely what ontological security entails. As initially coined by R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1969), ontological security refers to a stable mental state or a defensive sphere attained by the individual through blotting out the various potential risks to which they are prone (1969: 40). In this sense, ontological security refers to an individual's sense of safety and wellbeing in an uncertain environment. While the concept originated with Laing, it has found more recent use in the sociological writing of Anthony Giddens. According to Giddens (1990: 92), ontological security signifies an individual's sense of constancy and continuity in their social and material environments. This suggests a feeling of

stability held by the individual in their sense of self and in their broader surroundings. While an ontologically secure person can be said to have a sense of confidence in the security of their personal selves and their broader social and material spheres, Giddens (1991: 53) also notes that the absence of such feelings is likely to leave the individual “ontologically insecure”, with an extreme apprehension of future possible scenarios. Grounded in metaphysics, “ontology” refers to “being”: something which is continual and stable (Lowe, 2007). By association with “security”, “ontological security” therefore denotes a concrete sense of safety and general wellbeing. Bereft of ontological security however, the ontologically insecure individual is one who lacks such surety and is continually subject to doubt. In the context of this thesis, the question is whether the threat presented by global risks upsets a sense of ontological security at the level of daily life.

The topic of this thesis is approached in two different ways in the risk literature. On one side, the “risk society” approach of Ulrich Beck (for example 1992, 1994, 1995, 1999 and 2002) and Anthony Giddens (for example 1990, 1991, 1994a, and 1999) maintains that not only is the current age marked by a rise in the number of objectively existing global risks, it is also marked by a heightened awareness amongst the general public of the threats such risks pose. Common to Beck and Giddens is the belief that the very attempt of modernisation to forge certainty and order in the social and natural environments has inadvertently led to a number of globalised risks that threaten the lives of all individuals. To illustrate their point, Beck and Giddens refer to the risks of climate change, nuclear war, terrorism and genetic engineering.¹ What is noticeable about the risk society literature is that it presents individuals as being aware of “the bigger picture” owing to the influence of the media. Accordingly, Beck and Giddens each posit that this has led to the creation of widespread anxiety that permeates the current age.²

While Beck and Giddens present individuals as being fearful of global risks, risk theorists Mary Douglas (for example 1982 with Aaron Wildavsky, 1986 and 1992) and Deborah Lupton (for example 1999a, 1999b, and 2002 and 2003 with John Tulloch), present an alternative position which is broadly termed “socio-cultural

¹ See Chapter Two.

² See Chapter Two.

theory”. As opposed to Beck’s and Giddens’ macro-sociological perspectives, socio-cultural theory is predominantly micro-sociological in orientation and views the social and cultural background of the individual as mediating factors in deciding which risks are worthy of attention. While Beck and Giddens present “top-down” perspectives on risk, Douglas and Lupton present “bottom-up” positions where an individual’s reaction to risk is determined by situated experience and not by a risk’s objective nature. The corollary of this for Douglas and Lupton is that individuals have a tendency to prioritise risks in their daily lives, paying attention to some while bracketing out others. The implication of this approach is that the scale and intensity of a risk is inconsequential to whether it elicits concern.³

1.2. Thesis and Place of Study

1.2.1. Risk and Tourism

Recognising a discrepancy between the risk society and socio-cultural perspectives, this thesis aims to offer an empirical approach to the debate, one that also has practical relevance in New Zealand. Until now, the predominant paradigm in New Zealand is one that has viewed the country as “safe” and “secure” and, owing to its geographic isolation in the South Pacific, insulated from global affairs (Janes, 2006: 2). Such a perception of New Zealand has not been limited to its resident population alone; New Zealand’s reputation for safety and isolation from the turbulence of worldwide power struggles and political conflicts has been one of the major reasons why many tourists choose to travel to the country (Ruggia, 2003: 73). However, in a globalised world, a broader paradigm exists in which individuals in all areas can be conceptualised both as actors within localised spheres of interaction and as participants within a global network of exchange. This relates to the fact that, in the contemporary world, individuals, communities and even countries are less bound by geographical difference and are drawn together by links that transcend spatial division. Beynon and Dunkerley (2000: 6), for instance, state that in a globalised world all political and geographic boundaries are “rendered permeable” to such an extent that complete isolation from the rest of the world is now virtually impossible to maintain. An example of this is the way in which local, regional and national economies have become enmeshed in a broader system of global economic interaction

³ See Chapter Two.

(Dicken, 2000: 261). By being part of a wider global community, individuals are not only subject to events that occur within their local settings but also to those that emerge out of a broader, global environment. Recognising this, even people within a somewhat “safe” and isolated country like New Zealand are exposed to events that emerge from elsewhere.

One area where New Zealand is vulnerable in the context of the global risk environment is through its reliance on tourism. As detailed in Chapter Four of this thesis, topics of media interest in recent years have focused on the threats such risks as terrorism, oil market volatility, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza pose to tourism’s future. Given that tourism contributes approximately 9.4 per cent of New Zealand’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for one out of every ten jobs in the country,⁴ any event that undermines tourism has the potential to cause damage to the New Zealand economy and to the economies of New Zealand’s various tourist-dependent communities. Furthermore, given that international tourism is New Zealand’s highest earner of foreign exchange and is thus itself an integral component of New Zealand’s tourist industry,⁵ any event that undermines global tourism flows has the potential to inflict severe consequences in areas dependent on international markets.⁶ Recognising this, the risk debate finds particular relevance in areas where tourism provides the principle economic activity.

1.2.2. A Case Study of Akaroa

One area in New Zealand that depends on tourism is the township of Akaroa (see Figure 1.1). Located on Banks Peninsula on the East Coast of the South Island and approximately 82 kilometres from Christchurch, Akaroa’s economy is almost entirely tourism-based. More significantly, although the township benefits from a strong domestic tourism market, Akaroa also has a high dependency on international tourism. This is because its main tourist attraction, the Hector’s Dolphins, and the services based on this, draw a mostly international clientele. However, this also relates to international visitors having a tendency to spend significantly more than their domestic counterparts per visit.⁷ Because of this, Akaroa is vulnerable to a number of

⁴ See Chapter Two.

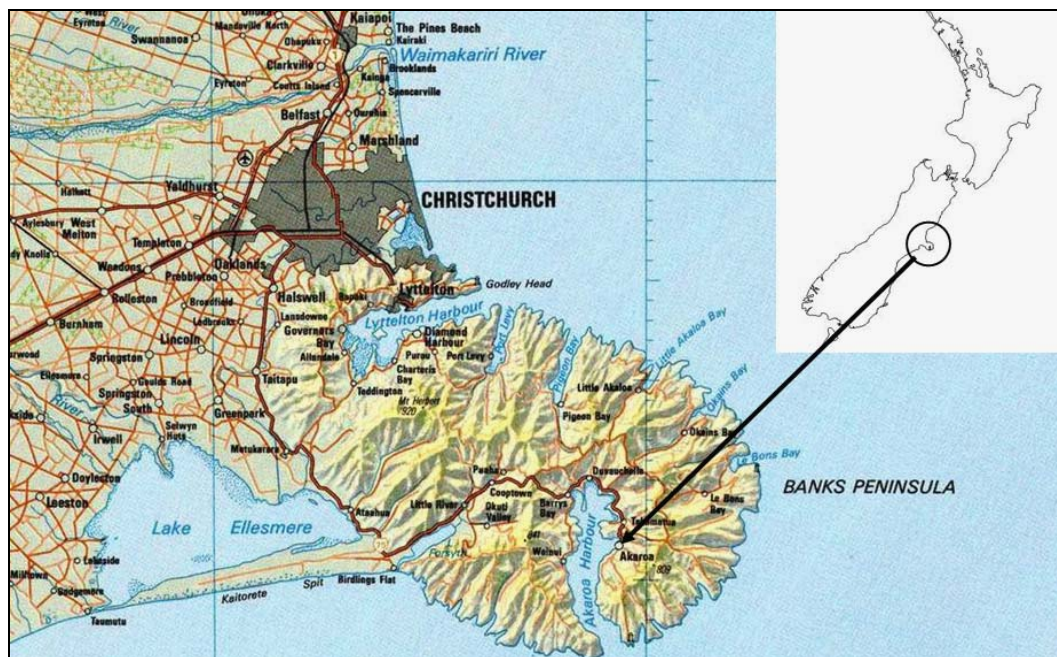
⁵ See Chapter Two.

⁶ See Chapter Four.

⁷ See Chapter Three.

global risks that have the potential to undermine the inbound tourist market. This leaves the township open to the possibility of a severe economic decline. In addition, like anywhere, Akaroa is a place with its own day-to-day problems.⁸ Because of this, Akaroa is a location where local *and* global issues have relevance to individuals' everyday lives. Consequently, Akaroa provides an ideal case study from which to establish whether global risks or more everyday problems dominate people's thinking.

Figure 1.1 Akaroa in Relation to Christchurch and New Zealand



Source: Metamedia Limited (2007a) (Scale: 1:500, 000).

1.2.3. Thesis

While Beck and Giddens argue that individuals are both aware of and consciously affected by risks in the global environment, on the basis of Douglas' and Lupton's assertions, this thesis maintains that this is not entirely certain. Although we live in an age where global risks could wreak immeasurable damage,⁹ this thesis argues that what may in fact capture the attention of most individuals are events and situations that are relatively commonplace. In moments of reflection, global risks may seem momentarily terrifying, yet despite the damage they may cause, this thesis proposes that such risks may register only as peripheral concerns. The reason for this is that

⁸ See Chapter Three.

⁹ See Chapter Four.

such risks might be too abstract to be taken seriously, compared to those that arise day-to-day. The basis for this proposition rests in the view that global risks, in the main, lack a tangible dimension and thus the immediacy apparent in local-level risks which require urgent and serious action. Thus, while this thesis does not contest the risk society argument that the current age is marked by the emergence of risks that transcend the confines of geographical space, it questions whether an awareness of global-level risks necessarily translates to a sense of being *at risk*.

1.3. Research Objectives

1.3.1. To Offer an Empirically Grounded Approach to the Risk Literature

The first aim of this study is to offer an empirically grounded approach to the risk literature. A major problem with both the risk society and socio-cultural approaches to risk is that they remain distinctly theoretical and offer little real insight into how global risks are perceived by lay people in daily life. Of the four risk theorists reviewed in this thesis, only Lupton takes a grounded approach in the sociological literature by providing studies identifying which risks are deemed most threatening by individuals. However, Lupton herself acknowledges that more studies in this area need to be conducted.¹⁰ In forming an empirically grounded approach to the risk literature, the first aim of this thesis is to follow Lupton by showing how risk is perceived and experienced within the context of a tourist-dependent community.

1.3.2. To Lay the Foundation for Research on a Tourism Crisis

As this thesis deals with matters of risk and risk perception, it relates directly to the issues of risk planning and prevention. While in most cases, it is the role of those at the institutional level (central, regional and local government) to consider, discuss and plan for emergencies, most often it is those at the street-level who are affected. Prior to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina for instance, it was known amongst those at both the governmental and local levels that a catastrophic event in New Orleans would result in major flooding (Brinkley, 2006: 14-15). Furthermore, such a scenario was predicted (Berger, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Fischetti, 2001). Curiously, despite knowledge of the threat that loomed, a lack of urgency was apparent at all levels. It was not until after Hurricane Katrina had wreaked havoc that serious action

¹⁰ See Chapter Two.

was taken to plan and prepare for another such event in the future (Tidmore, 2007). As Hurricane Katrina demonstrates, a lack of urgency regarding risks deemed high in consequence yet low in probability can have devastating repercussions. Furthermore, Katrina indicates that in many cases it is not until a catastrophic threat becomes manifest that people (at both the local and institutional levels) acknowledge its reality and start to act. In terms of the “precautionary principle”, this form of thinking and reacting to risk is clearly flawed. As the principle maintains, preventative measures must be taken to avoid risks even when there is uncertainty concerning their occurrence (Miller and Conco, 2000: 84). A stronger version of the principle may suggest that precautionary steps must be taken *precisely because* there is uncertainty concerning whether a risk will become manifest. In this respect, a cautious approach is to acknowledge the possibility of a risk and to make provisions. Recognising that people at the local-level may have a tendency to remain indifferent to global risks and that few studies exist regarding New Zealand’s vulnerability in the global risk environment, the second aim of this study is to lay the groundwork for research on how the effects of global risks upon tourist-dependent areas can be managed.

1.4. Chapter Summary

Chapter Two sets the scene for this thesis by offering a review of the risk literature. In this chapter, the tensions between the risk society and socio-cultural approaches are laid bare in order to expose the differences that exist between a macro-sociological and micro-sociological analysis of risk. The chapter begins with a synopsis of the risk society literature of both Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens and explores what is meant by “the risk society”. Significant in this part of the chapter is Beck’s and Giddens’ shared belief that we now live in an age where the Enlightenment-inspired quest to forge certainty and order in the world has unwittingly led to the creation of the opposite: a world of risk and uncertainty. Here, Chapter Two delves into the contention held by both Beck and Giddens that the modern age is marked by the unforeseen consequences of technological innovation, with the creation of new, human-made risks on a scale that transcends all geographical and political distinctions. This is followed by a discussion of their argument that not only is the modern age marked by the emergence of global risks, it is also marked by a heightened awareness of how dangerous the world has become. Following this, Chapter Two presents an overview of the socio-cultural literature on risk as an

alternative view to Beck's and Giddens' macro-sociological approach. Here, the views of Mary Douglas and Deborah Lupton are discussed to present the view that the social and cultural backgrounds of individuals influence which events are perceived as risks. Chapter Two then criticises both bodies of risk theory for being overly theoretical and suggests that the question of how global risks are perceived can be approached from a more empirical perspective. The chapter finishes by arguing that a study of risk in the context of Akaroa offers such an approach and presents the research methodology for this exercise.

Following an outline of the risk debate and the methodology used for this thesis, Chapter Three offers an examination of Akaroa's dependence on tourism, thus beginning the process of placing the risk debate in context. The chapter begins by examining a number of features observable within Akaroa's built environment that reflects its tourism dependence. This sets the scene for an examination of how tourism has developed into Akaroa's central economic activity, one that is now responsible for the majority of those employed in the township. The chapter then takes a specific look at the significance of international tourism in the township, its importance to business owners and the community as a whole. The chapter shows that, although domestic tourism appears to be Akaroa's predominant market in terms of visitor numbers, the international market contributes more significantly to the township's economy, meaning a decline in international visitors would cause serious economic and social impacts. While the first half of the chapter discusses Akaroa's dependence on tourism, the second looks at the various social groups and conflicting interests in the township, and thus presents Akaroa as a place not only susceptible to the risk of an economic depression, but where risk is socially constructed amongst a web of localised tensions. In this part, a micro-level analysis is made of Akaroa's various social groups and the many points of ideological disparity among them that lie at the centre of an ongoing battle for power.

While Chapter Three examines Akaroa as a geographically situated unit of social and economic commerce, Chapter Four takes a broader perspective, acknowledging the township as a participant in a larger network of global economic interaction. The chapter thus presents a macro-sociological view of Akaroa in which the township is portrayed as existing in a world where risks are internationally shared. The chapter

argues that, because New Zealand's geographical isolation determines a reliance on international aviation, tourist-dependent communities in New Zealand are prone to events that undermine global tourist flows. Continuing, the chapter suggests that a feature of many risks with a global reach is their ability to undermine the human mobility aspect of globalisation on which international tourism and travel depends. Because of this, trend-based forecasts for visitor growth are likely to give a false sense of optimism because a central feature of global risks is that they lack certainty and defy expectation. Based upon this premise, four risks to tourism are examined of recent topical interest: climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza. The aim of this chapter is therefore to provide an account of the risks that Akaroa stakeholders face that is in step with the macro-sociological approach of the risk society literature.

Building upon the earlier chapters, Chapter Five takes the question of this thesis beyond the realm of theory by offering an empirically-based examination of what those with a stake in Akaroa fear the most. With the fundamentals of the risk debate outlined in Chapter Two, and micro and macro-level analyses of Akaroa's risk environments presented in chapters Three and Four respectively, Chapter Five seeks to take the discussion one step further by providing a study of the types of risks community members perceive as being most threatening. In accomplishing this task, the interviewees' responses to the question of what risks they feel are most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general are presented in order to establish which environment, the global or the local, has the greatest influence on their thinking. Following this, and in order to add further weight to the findings of this thesis, the results of a content analysis of the *Akaroa Mail* are presented to give evidence of the types of issues that hold sway in public discourse. As the *Akaroa Mail* is the only local newspaper and medium for public expression of concerns, this component of Chapter Five aims to strengthen the conclusions drawn from the interviewing process.

Concluding this study, Chapter Six revisits the argument of this thesis and aims to evaluate whether it was supported by research findings. In doing so, the chapter reviews the claims made in the risk society and socio-cultural literature in light of Akaroa's place in the global risk environment, and then looks to assess each

perspective's strengths and weaknesses. Extrapolating from this, Chapter Six continues by suggesting that other tourist-dependent communities in New Zealand may similarly be threatened by global risks as well as being unprepared for their effects. Finally, recommendations are given for where research could be conducted in the future.

2. Literature Review and Method

2.1. Introduction

What follows is a critical review of two positions in the risk literature and a re-orientation of the literature towards an area of particular relevance to New Zealand, tourism. Featured first are the theories of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens who have written extensively on the emergence of global risks in the current age. Central to their respective views is that society has entered into an age marked by the unintended consequences of industrial expansion and technological innovation. This, they argue, has resulted in the emergence of a number of risks that have grown beyond the confines of geography and political distinction, and which shroud all places in a climate of threat and uncertainty. In addition, each claims that the ways in which such risks have been communicated to the public via the media has also resulted in a pervasive *sense* of risk in the contemporary age.

Following a review of Beck and Giddens, this chapter presents the work of Mary Douglas and Deborah Lupton. Broadly termed socio-cultural theory, the position taken by these authors represents a micro-sociological or “bottom-up” approach that suggests that the perception of risk is largely determined by individuals’ social and cultural environments. Thus of most concern to these theorists are the factors that influence why risks are *identified* as such. This perspective diverts attention from the objectivity of risks to the ways in which risk perception is socially constructed. The corollary of this view is that, despite their catastrophic threat, global risks may in fact warrant little sense of apprehension compared to those that are local or personal in nature. While Douglas is presented as discussing these points at the level of theoretical abstraction, Lupton is shown to be the first to test them empirically at the level of everyday experience.

Following in the footsteps of Lupton, this chapter takes the topic of risk beyond the confines of theory by proposing a case study of risk as it applies to the tourist-dependent township of Akaroa. As argued throughout this thesis, tourism provides an area in New Zealand where discussions on risk are important, as it is an industry that is particularly susceptible to global events. In presenting Akaroa as a case study, the

aim is not only to provide an empirical approach to the risk debate but also to show how the risk literature applies to the ways in which stakeholders in a tourist-dependent community give priority to risk.

2.2. The Risk Society

2.2.1. Ulrich Beck

Simply put, the “risk society” describes a new period in human history marked by the presence of a series of dangers that are global in nature and effect. The irony of this concept is that it denotes a situation unwittingly caused by humanity’s quest for surety in an otherwise uncertain world. As Beck claims in *World Risk Society* (1999: 72):

This concept describes a phase of development of modern society in which the social, political, ecological and individual risks created by the momentum of innovation increasingly elude the control of protective institutions of industrial society.

The concept, Beck (1999: 73) explains, thus denotes a transitional phase whereby the modern age is no longer marked solely by the generation of social wealth but also by a series of uncontrollable risks that exist as the unintended and unforeseen consequences of rapid technological innovation. Furthermore, Beck (1999: 19) argues that the emergence of such risks marks the transition from modern industrial society to the “*world risk society*”, in which central to contemporary existence is no longer the comfort, security and affluence provided by industrial progress but a series of uncontrollable risks that transcend all points of division. In fact, Beck (1999: 1, 2) contends that “modernity” is no longer adequately descriptive of the current age, preferring the terms “late-modernity” or “reflexive modernity” to describe a point in history that is distinguished by a number of global threats which directly undermine modernity’s self-proclaimed mission of establishing order. Risks of these kinds Beck (1999: 5, 6) terms “manufactured uncertainties” as they are inadvertently caused as a by-product of industrial growth. Modernity, he argues, has therefore become “radicalized” by the products of its own making, ensuring that the very notion of “controllability, certainty or security”, which was so fundamental to early industrial society, no longer applies (Beck, 1999: 2).

Beck uses various examples to support his argument. In his seminal work, *The Risk Society* (1992), he points to Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)¹¹ as a “textbook example” of the risk society, caused inadvertently by human action with consequences that extend far beyond the confines of national boundaries (1992: 48-49). In *World Risk Society*, Beck (1999: 34-36) also points to various ecological and technological dangers, such as the hole in the ozone layer, global warming and the risks involved with genetic engineering, all of which, he says, have the potential to endanger human life and the environment. Within the same framework, he lists threats posed by nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, which, he argues, have been magnified since the end of the East-West confrontation with the advent of private terrorist groups. Terrorist attacks in particular, states Beck in *The Terrorist Risk: World Risk Society Revisited* (2002), are a form of “intentional risk” which, while not manufactured in the strongest use of the term, are also humanly attributable and aim to produce the effects manufactured risks produce unintentionally (2002: 44). Events such as 9/11 and the Bali bombings exemplify Beck’s point well. Elsewhere in *World Risk Society*, Beck extends his thesis beyond events that are ecological, technological and intentional to include risks that are of an economic nature. Here, Beck (1999: 6-7) speaks of the “*new global market of risk*” where risks that stem from the global economic market, such as the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997-1998,¹² are found to affect financial markets across the globe. With each example, Beck paints a picture of an uncertain global climate rife with risks of humanity’s own making.

Although Beck is quick to note the reality of the global risk environment, he follows this by arguing that modern life is also marked by a general *sense* of risk. Here, Beck (1999: 73) argues that if we call the transition from industrial society “reflexivity”, then the second stage of reflexive modernisation is “reflection”, where society *reflects* and becomes conscious of itself *as* a risk society. Qualifying this, Beck (1992: 23) contends that this may owe less to the quantity of risks in the late modern age than to society’s growing awareness of them. This, Beck claims, is because risks in the age of

¹¹ Otherwise known as “mad-cow’s disease”, BSE is a neurodegenerative disease of cattle caused by feeding mammalian by-products to cows. It is thought to be related to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) which is a similar degenerative neurological disease in humans (Brown, 2001).

¹² This was a period of economic unrest that started in Thailand and South Korea and affected currencies and stock markets in several Asian countries (Weisbrot, 2007).

reflexive modernity are largely immaterial; they are “risks in knowledge” and exist in so much as we have knowledge about them (ibid). This stems, he explains, from an epistemic divide, whereby lay or public knowledge of risk is subservient to that of “experts” who communicate to the public which risks are worth worrying about (ibid). As Beck (1999: 55) explains in *World Risk Society*:

[A] significant number of technologically produced hazards, such as those associated with chemical pollution, atomic radiation and genetically modified organisms, are characterized by an inaccessibility to the human senses. They operate outside the capacity of (unaided) human perception. Everyday life is ‘blind’ in relation to hazards which threaten life and thus depends in its inner decisions on experts and counter-experts. Not only the potential harm but this ‘*expropriation of the senses*’ by global risks makes life insecure.

In this situation, lay people become reliant upon expert knowledge to inform and warn them about various unforeseeable dangers. Expert opinion thus becomes the eyes and ears of those unable to see or predict the risks that surround them. Central in this form of communication between experts and the lay public, explains Beck, is the media. In *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (1995: 100), Beck argues that:

What eludes sensory perception becomes socially available to ‘experience’ in media pictures and reports. Pictures of tree skeletons, worm-infested fish, dead seals (whose living images have been engraved on human hearts) condense and concretize what is otherwise ungraspable in everyday life.

Through the media, Beck identifies a global transmission of risk awareness, aiding in the creation of a risk-conscious public in an already objectively real global risk environment. In Beck’s (1999: 141-142) view, the logical consequence of this is that the public begin to lose faith in expert systems charged with the responsibility of managing risk. In his opinion, this begins to create a tentative situation; not only do the general public begin to acquire a heightened level of risk awareness, their mistrust in the ability of individuals and institutions to actively deal with risks leads to an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty.

2.2.2. Anthony Giddens

Alongside Beck, Giddens has written extensively upon the concept of risk, with ideas that parallel those of his contemporary. Like Beck, Giddens believes that humanity's very attempts to establish certainty have created a paradoxical situation. In *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives* (1999), Giddens (1999: 26) argues that in all traditional cultures up to the present day humans were most concerned about risks stemming from "external" nature, such as bad harvests or floods. However, a point came where humanity began worrying less about the risks of nature and more about what has been done *to* nature. This is where Giddens differentiates between external (natural) risks and the manufactured risks spoken of by Beck. The point for Giddens is that the balance of risks has shifted; the hazards created via modernisation have become of more concern than those of nature and much more catastrophic. This is a world, Giddens contends in 'Risk, trust, reflexivity' (1994b), which would have been simply unfathomable to our Enlightenment forebears who began the modernisation process. He argues: "Such thinkers believed, quite reasonably, that the more we get to know about the world as collective humanity, the more we can control and direct it to our own purposes" (1994b: 184). Evidently, however, the opposite has occurred and, instead of creating a form of ordered utopia as envisaged, the Enlightenment-inspired drive for certainty has created a world that has become progressively beyond control. Illustrating his point in much the same way as Beck, Giddens (1999: 29, 32-33) speaks of events such as Chernobyl, global warming and the rise of genetic engineering technology, where no one can predict with any certainty what the long-term consequences may be.

Like Beck, Giddens considers that one of the consequences of living in a world risk society is that individuals *feel* more at risk. Giddens argues that this has much to do with the immaterial nature of risks and how they are communicated to the public. Speaking of the role of the media in *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991), Giddens (1991: 27) argues that one of the defining features of the global age is how distant events intrude on day-to-day consciousness. This, he explains, is because many of the items reported on the news, although external and remote to the viewer, routinely enter into everyday awareness and lead to the creation of a risk conscious public. Concurring with Beck, in *The Consequences of*

Modernity (1990) Giddens (1990: 130) argues that widespread lay knowledge of the global risk environment leads to an awareness of the limits of expertise which in turn weakens the public's "faith" in those who are allocated responsibility for managing risk. In this respect, a mark of the modern age for Giddens is not just the emergence of global risks but that lay individuals feel exposed to risks in the global environment. Relating this back to the notion of ontological security, Giddens (1991: 127) argues that ontological security involves "a basic trust" which is expressed as a "bracketing-out" of possible events that could be a cause for alarm. However, he maintains that no amount of bracketing is likely to overcome the sense of unease produced by being aware that any number of uncontrollable risks could bring the world literally to an end (1991: 183). Thus, both Giddens and Beck present a top-down approach where knowledge of risks that loom in the global environment has a deeply unsettling effect. This, however, is a point of much contention.

2.3. Socio-Cultural Theory

2.3.1. Mary Douglas

The weakness of the macro-sociological perspective in the risk debate is that it leaves unacknowledged social and cultural factors that may determine what is viewed as a risk at any given time. Representative of this view is Mary Douglas. In *Risk and Culture* (1982), Douglas (with Wildavsky) argues that discussions about risk should not centre on whether a risk is adequately or inadequately perceived but on the influences that determine how risks are identified and judged. In her view, social actors are not remote, isolated creatures who observe and analyse their environment in an independent manner, they are beings who, when faced with issues of uncertainty, come already immersed in culturally learned assumptions and modes of thinking. Douglas (1982: 8) states:

[T]he choice of risks to worry about depends on the social forms selected. The choice of risks and the choice of how to live are taken together. Each form of social life has its own typical risk portfolio. Common values have common fears.

This is a social constructionist perspective of risk, where individuals look at the world through social looking glasses from which reality is *interpreted*. Through their respective positions, social actors translate the events around them. Risks, according

to Douglas (1982: 14), are thus socially formed, as individuals may highlight certain events as risks while downplaying others. In accordance with this view, it is not so much an issue of individuals perceiving risks adequately, it is more a matter of which events individuals *identify* as threatening. This perspective does not categorise risk perception as “irrational” but accepts that groups have different criteria for what counts as risk. While dangers do exist, there are no objective risks as such; the world is merely framed and responded to according to how individuals perceive it. This supports the position that what is understood as a danger, risk or hazard is a product of socially contingent ways of looking. This would suggest that the perception of risk is a socially conditioned phenomenon.

While Douglas focuses on the relativity of risk to context, she makes a number of additional comments that relate to the prioritisation of risks in daily life. Speaking in *Risk and Blame* (1992) of the social factors that determine a risk’s relevance, Douglas (1992: 46) argues that the most decisive factor is whether a risk is perceived as central or peripheral to an individual’s purposes. Going further, in *Risk and Culture* Douglas (1982: 3, 9) argues that individuals generally create a hierarchy of risks, ignoring most of the potential dangers that surround them in order to concentrate on a select few. Recognising that global risks are for the most part immaterial and seldom manifest within individuals’ lifetimes, this raises the question of whether such risks would ever be prioritised as being of primary importance. Douglas pursues this line of argument again in *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences* (1986), contending that most individuals have a strong sense of “subjective immunity” when it comes to threat because of a propensity to cut off some perceptions of risk so that their immediate social and material environments can appear safer than they are (1986: 29-30). This implies that attention to risk is selective, raising doubt as to whether global risks would elicit the amount of concern that Beck and Giddens each seem to suggest.

2.3.2. Deborah Lupton (with John Tulloch)

A second proponent of socio-cultural theory is Deborah Lupton. Articulating a position similar to Douglas', Lupton refutes Beck's and Giddens' approach which gives precedence to the objectivity of risks by advocating the importance of subjectivity and context in the formation of risk beliefs. Lupton stands out from the theorists mentioned above because much of her work exists not only as a commentary on their views but also as an attempt to ground the risk society and socio-cultural literature at the level of lived experience. Thus, much of her work is an effort to move risk debates from the level of theoretical abstraction to the level of empirical observation. Of relevance to this thesis are two of her publications co-written with fellow risk theorist John Tulloch. The first, *Risk is Part of Your Life: Risk Epistemologies among a Group of Australians* (2002), is a qualitative study of 74 Australians that directly confronts the limits of the top-down approach to risk perception. The reason for conducting the study, Lupton and Tulloch (2002: 321) explain, was to establish whether the risks people feel they are exposed to are generated across regional and national borders, are local in origin or just a result of their personal circumstances. In doing so, their study aimed to establish the types of risks individuals find most threatening to themselves and to other members of their society. Upon completing the study, Lupton and Tulloch found that lay perceptions of risk were localised and contextualised, attributable to individuals' respective situations and involving personal issues such as the security of family, employment, health, the threat of violence and personal relationships. Global-level risks, they found, barely rated a mention (2002: 331-332).

Lupton and Tulloch's second attempt to offer an empirically-based critique of the risk literature was published in *Risk and Everyday Life* (2003). Here, the authors attempted to compare the findings of their Australian case study with those of a group of 60 Britons of various ages and occupations. As in their initial study, Lupton and Tulloch framed their questions in such a way as to form an understanding of whether individuals' risk beliefs were primarily shaped by global forces, local issues or through a set of more personal circumstances. On completing this second part of their research, Lupton and Tulloch found their British participants to have concerns of a nature similar to their Australian counterparts. Alongside the participants in their

Australian study, many of Lupton and Tulloch's British interviewees identified local or personal issues such as unemployment, social division, drug abuse and crime as risks of the highest concern (2003: 27). This suggests that, although global risks are highly publicised, it is the local and personal spheres of daily life that dominate people's thinking.

Although Lupton and Tulloch provide two empirically based studies of risk, at the end of *Risk and Everyday Life* they state that their research has only just begun to address the ways in which the risk logic of lay people operates in everyday life. Because of this, they maintain that additional research still needs to be undertaken to form a more complete understanding of the multiple "risk cultures" in late modernity (2003: 134). Acknowledging this deficiency, I propose a contribution to the risk literature through an empirical examination of risk and risk perception as situated in the tourist-dependent township of Akaroa.

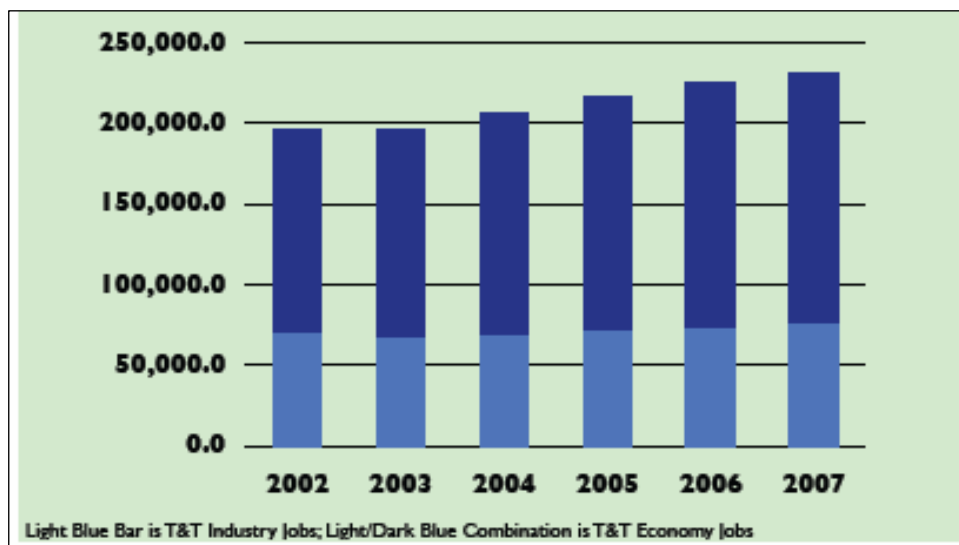
2.4. Gaps in the Literature: Tourism and Risk

Until the work of Lupton and Tulloch, little attempt had been made to apply the risk literature to lived experience. However, it is clear that while much of the risk debate exists at a level of theory, there is room for it to be applied to various areas of life that are shrouded in risk and uncertainty. This may not only provide further insight into the risk debate, it may also highlight whether people actively employ caution in their thinking by being mindful of the various risks to which they are prone. In the context of New Zealand, this has great relevance to those who depend on tourism.

Such is tourism's global significance, it has developed into the world's most dominant industry. In figures provided by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism accounts for approximately 10.4 per cent of the World's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and both directly and indirectly employs around 231 million people worldwide or 8.3 per cent of the entire global workforce (WTTC, 2007a) (see Figure 2.1). This makes it a major contributor to the global economy and a means of subsistence for many. For New Zealand in particular, tourism is vital. Based upon statistics released by the Ministry of Tourism in 2006, tourism accounts for approximately 9.9 per cent of total employment, or one out of every 10 jobs, and 9.4 per cent of GDP (see Figure 2.2). International tourism also holds the mantle as New

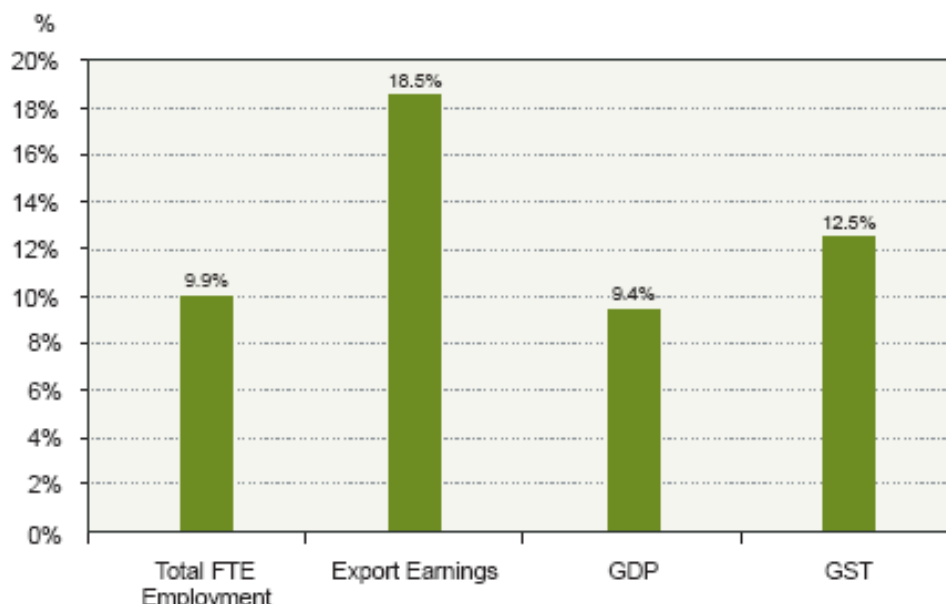
Zealand's largest earner of foreign exchange (see Figure 2.3). This reflects tourism's position as one of New Zealand's main economic activities. On a smaller scale, tourism also serves as the economic foundation for many of New Zealand's smaller population centres, including Kaikoura (Butcher, Fairweather and Simmons, 1998), Rotorua (Butcher, Fairweather and Simmons, 2000) and Queenstown (Oppermann, 1994).

Figure 2.1 World Travel and Tourism Employment ('000s of Jobs)

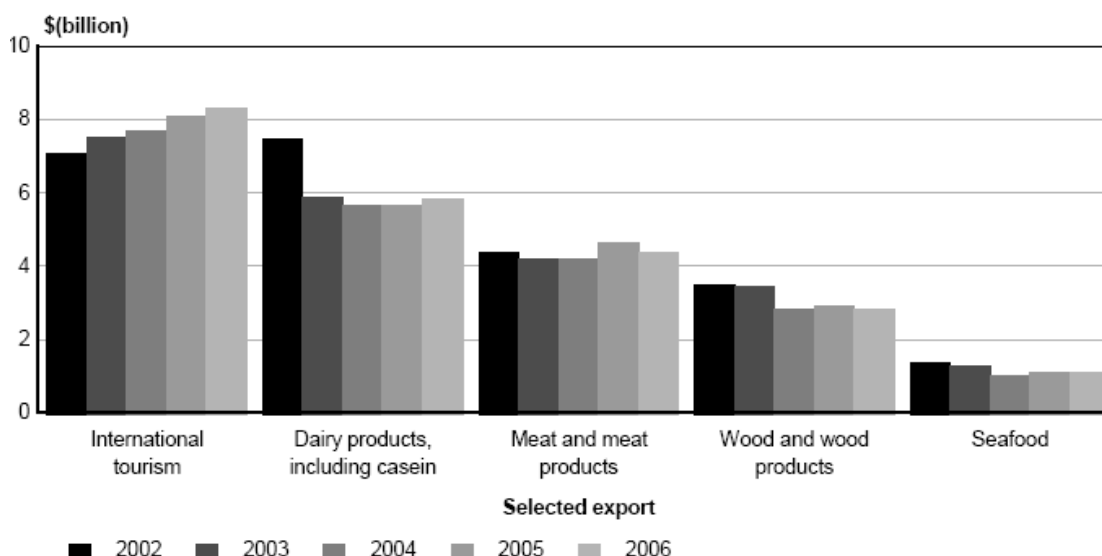


Source: WTTC (2007b: 3).

Figure 2.2 Tourism Contributions to the New Zealand Economy (2004)



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2006: 5).

Figure 2.3 Comparison with Selected Primary Exports (Year Ended March 2006)

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2006a: 8).

While tourism has developed as a means of subsistence for many, a problem has arisen in that the tourism industry has shown itself in recent years to be highly prone to various global threats. Illustrative of this are the global effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in Washington D.C. and New York. In a study entitled *Tourism Crisis Management* (2002), Blake and Sinclair established that, such was 9/11's effect in deterring travel to and within the US in the 12 months following the attacks, approximately 335,000 US jobs were lost in tourism and in industries related to tourism, including 93,000 within the airline industry alone (2002: 18). However, this only marked the beginning of 9/11's global effect. In 'Economic Costs of Terrorism' (2002), Hayes reports that 9/11 also caused similar devastation worldwide, with a sharp decline in travel demand forcing a number of airline carriers, such as Belgian carrier "Sabena", to file for bankruptcy, and others in Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Scandinavia to cut routes and lay off tens of thousands of employees. On a collective scale, Hayes explains that 9/11 caused the aviation industry to plunge to its worst crisis in more than 50 years, costing approximately 400,000 jobs around the world.

Although global tourism recovered from 9/11, approximately 18 months later the world experienced an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), an acute viral illness which developed into a worldwide pandemic due to its spread

through international travel (Abraham, 2005: 92). The irony of SARS was that it was spread through international air travel from a small town in China's Guangdong province to many of the world's international travel hubs and popular holiday destinations, causing visitor numbers in many of these areas to decline (*ibid*). The impact of SARS was serious, with the WTTC estimating losses of 17,500 industry jobs in Singapore and 62,000 industry jobs in Vietnam, amongst others (WTTC, 2007c). What is significant about 9/11 and SARS is that their effects were not limited to their points of origin; they spread to affect individuals dependent on tourism worldwide.

While the effects of 9/11 and SARS threw the lives of many who were dependent on tourism into disarray, each disaster only begins to illustrate the climate of risk and uncertainty that encompasses those who are dependent on the tourist dollar. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, tourism in New Zealand currently faces a number of threats to its immediate future and long-term survival. These include the threat of climate change, which has the potential to both threaten the future of long-haul travel and to corrode many of New Zealand's environmental attractions; the imminent depletion of oil, which at its extreme may see the end of mass tourism; avian influenza, which may, among other things, lead New Zealand to close its borders to the outside world; and terrorism, which could stem the flow of visitors to New Zealand's shores. Each of these fit Beck's and Giddens' risk society framework as they all, in different ways, exist as unforeseen consequences of modernisation.¹³ This paints a picture in which tourist-dependent areas in New Zealand are enveloped by a global climate of threat. Because of the publicity given to these risks, a tourist-dependent community would be an ideal location to establish whether knowledge of global risks does indeed cause feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and fear, or whether such knowledge is too abstract to generate concern in daily life. In addition, such a study could help to raise awareness of a possible economic decline in tourist-dependent townships, laying the foundation for further research in the area.

¹³ See Chapter Four.

2.5. Method

2.5.1. Reasons for Selecting Akaroa

Situated on Banks Peninsula on the East Coast of New Zealand's South Island, and nestled by the shore of the Akaroa Harbour, Akaroa is a township with a long association with tourism. Renowned for its aesthetic beauty, unique history and heritage attractions, Akaroa also provides an area in which approximately 50 per cent of the residential population are employed directly in tourism and where the industry provides many secondary employment opportunities.¹⁴ This is evident upon any trip to its cafes and restaurants, gift and souvenir shops which visitors to the township often frequent. Seeing this, it becomes evident that tourism provides the economic foundation, or "lifeblood", from which the community is able to survive. Were visitor numbers to drop in the area, it is clear that the community as a whole would suffer.

As this thesis is based on the premise that areas that are dependent on international tourism are susceptible to many global-level events, it was important to find a place where the international visitor market is indispensable. Akaroa fits this description. As detailed in Chapter Three, while Akaroa's close proximity to Christchurch allows the township to benefit from a strong domestic market, with many domestic day visitors, its proximity also places Akaroa in a position to benefit from a high number of international visitors who seek to explore attractions close to Christchurch city. In addition, Akaroa's main tourist attraction, the Hector's Dolphins, and the various businesses that capitalise on this attraction, draw a mostly international clientele.¹⁵ This shows that international tourism forms a significant part of Akaroa's economic foundation.

In addition to the economic significance of Akaroa's international visitor market, a body of literature and research on the township already exists, providing an informational base from which to draw. A number of resources in particular are useful for this study. These include *Community Perceptions of Tourism in Christchurch and Akaroa* (2003) by Shone, Simmons and Fairweather; *The Economic Impact of Tourism on Christchurch City and Akaroa Township* (2003) by Butcher, Fairweather

¹⁴ See Chapter Three.

¹⁵ See Chapter Three.

and Simmons; and ‘Adapting to Tourism: Community Responses to Tourism in Five New Zealand Tourism Destinations’ (2005) by Shone, Horn, Moran and Simmons. Another useful source of information is *Behind the Brochures: The (Re)Construction of Touristic Place Images in Akaroa, New Zealand* (2002), a PhD in sociology carried out by Joanna Fountain. By far the most extensive study conducted on Akaroa’s tourist industry, Fountain’s work explores the various “behind the scenes” processes involved in forming the place images used to market Akaroa as a tourist location. This research contributes essential information for understanding tourism’s importance to the township and assists in discerning the many day-to-day issues that stakeholders face.

2.5.2. Research Methods: Literature Search

The research strategy developed for this study comprises three parts: a literature search, thirteen one-on-one semi-structured interviews and a content analysis of letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail*. Beginning with an extensive review of existing literature on Akaroa, the township’s history, economy and social makeup were studied with the intention of establishing both the economic significance of tourism and the township’s various social groups. As I discovered during my research, the literature that exists on Akaroa is large and provides a substantial account of how tourism grew to become the primary economic activity. Information gained from this exercise provided an understanding of Akaroa as a place where tourism acts as an economic foundation and where inter-group conflict creates a sense of discord. This helped establish that Akaroa is a place both subject to the uncertainties of being overly dependent on an often-fragile industry and to the presence of many everyday problems.

Following a review of the Akaroa literature, a study was made of available sources specifying a number risks within the global environment that may bear upon Akaroa in the future. Here, websites, journals, books and newspaper articles on the risks of climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza were studied in order to develop an understanding of global-level threats to the township.¹⁶ Experts in tourism from the Ministry of Tourism and from Lincoln University’s Tourism Recreation

¹⁶ See Chapter Four.

Research and Education Centre (TRREC) were also consulted.¹⁷ While the risk society literature conveys how the global risk environment has emerged, it is severely limited in the examples it covers, missing many recently emerging global events. For this reason, a study of the global risk environment as it currently relates to tourism in New Zealand was essential to form an understanding of the risks that surround Akaroa and other similarly tourist-dependent areas. While various risks could have been covered,¹⁸ climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza were chosen owing to the media publicity they have received. In addition, as Beck and Giddens each focus on risks that are human created, it was important to focus on risks whose destructive potential is, at least in part, related to technological advancement. In various ways, each of these four risks matches this description.¹⁹

2.5.3. Research Methods: Interviewing and Newspaper Research

While the literature search was essential to establish Akaroa's relationship with tourism and the variety of local and global-level problems it faces, interviews and letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail* served to establish which forms of risk prevail in public consciousness. Beginning with the interviews, meetings with participants were held over a period of six months between early October 2006 and the end of March 2007. While only one interview was conducted per interviewee, an ongoing dialogue was maintained via email during this period to discuss questions that came to mind. This was important because global risks to tourism were frequently raised in the media during this time and it was necessary to establish whether these reports had elicited any reaction. As such, the presentation of interview material is an accurate reflection of participants' general concerns during the research period.

The selection process for the interviews first involved contacting a number of community and business organisations through the www.akaroa.com website, which is run by Akaroa District Promotions (ADP), an organisation that operates Akaroa's information centre and represents many of the township's business interests. My first two contacts through the website included the ADP's marketing manager and the curator of Akaroa's Museum. Through these initial contacts, I was able to create a list

¹⁷ These were the Ministry of Tourism's senior research analyst, Mike Chan, and Susanne Becken from Lincoln University's Tourism Recreation Research and Education Centre.

¹⁸ A global economic collapse for instance.

¹⁹ See Chapter Four.

of participants that grew with each successive interview – a technique commonly referred to as the “snowballing” method in fieldwork research (Taylor *et al.*, 2004: 165). While this method is useful in gathering interviewees, it can also provide an unbalanced spread of participants. This is where a meeting with Joanna Fountain and reading her work proved beneficial. In the final chapter of her thesis, Fountain presents the *Community Matrix of Place*, a model documenting the web of localised social relations within the Akaroa township.²⁰ This model enabled me to identify groups according to A) their motivation/rationale for being in Akaroa; B) their cultural appreciation of Akaroa and C) their belonging status, defining residents as either “locals” or “non-locals”. While Fountain uses this model to deconstruct what she sees as the conflicting accounts of Akaroa’s place identity and image marketing over time, it proved effective as a framework from which to group the participants of my own study and to understand the social basis of their risk beliefs. The meeting with Fountain helped me to understand her conceptual model of Akaroa’s social composition and thus enabled me to pinpoint the groups and individuals I needed to interview.

While the ADP’s website, the snowballing technique and a meeting with Joanna Fountain helped in the process of identifying and recruiting participants, the interview process itself was guided by techniques described in *Social Assessment: Theory, Practice and Techniques* (2004) by Taylor, Baines and Goodrich. In Chapter Eight of *Social Assessment*, Taylor *et al.* offer a description of methods used in community-based consultation. Here, Taylor *et al.* (2004: 163) provide a description of interviewing as a dynamic two-way process, where the discussion held between the interviewer and interviewee involves a mutual exchange of information. Employing this concept, meetings with research participants involved a process of fluid dialogue, where discussion flowed around open-ended questions and issues that arose during the course of each interview. After a brief explanation of my thesis, I began each interview by asking interviewees what risks they felt were most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general. Although the nature of this question was left open in order to allow each interviewee to discuss whatever came to mind, questions often became more focused in order to establish interviewees’ thoughts on

²⁰ See Chapter Three.

particular issues. This part of the interview process employed what Taylor *et al.* speak of as “triangulation”, where the interviewer checks information given by previous interviewees in order to grasp common points of concern (ibid). Using this technique helped form structure in my otherwise informal interview process and helped orientate each conversation according to issues raised in prior meetings with other stakeholders. By utilising this technique, not only was I able to establish an open exchange of communication with my participants, I managed to discover a number of issues at the centre of public consciousness.

Because the interviewing process involved a limited number of participants, an analysis of the *Akaroa Mail*'s letters to the editor section provided a means to substantiate the conclusions drawn out of the interviewing process. Significant for this study, the letters section of the *Akaroa Mail* is a well-maintained and popular segment of the paper, and one where residents of Akaroa frequently articulate concerns of almost any type. This is evident in the many letters expressing concern over issues as minor as the prevalence of dog excrement on footpaths, the trampling of flowerbeds by youths and the colour scheme of the local supermarket. Recognising the extent to which the *Akaroa Mail* is used to express discord over such matters, it is reasonable to assume that were risks of a global nature to register high in the minds of stakeholders for how they may bear on Akaroa, the *Akaroa Mail* would serve as the means by which such fears could be expressed. Acknowledging this, letters published in the paper from January 2002 to May 2007 were examined to further establish the types of issues that draw attention. January 2002 was selected as the starting date for this research because it is an approximate date for when media reports into the threat posed by global risks to New Zealand tourism began to regularly appear.²¹ May 2007 was chosen as the cut-off date because of time restrictions.

2.5.4. Organisation of Material

Because two different sources were used in gathering information about what risks are held as significant to stakeholders, information gained from each source had to be presented separately. This was accomplished by presenting interview material first, and using information gained from the *Akaroa Mail* second to substantiate interview

²¹ I established this through a search of New Zealand newspaper articles using the Factiva database.

findings. In addition, because the majority of interviewees in this study identify multiple risks rather than any one central concern, responses had to be classified according to a number of different categories and not simply dealt with on a person-to-person basis. Because of this, interviewees' names (which, for the purposes of anonymity, are replaced by pseudonyms) and comments appear in various sections throughout the discussion presented in Chapter Five. For organisational purposes, concerns are dealt with in terms of whether they are primarily business focused or non-business focused.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has established a major inconsistency in the risk literature. While Beck and Giddens acknowledge that the current age is one in which the consequences of modernity have seen the creation of a number of global risks, both assume that such risks have a conscious effect on individuals without presenting evidence for their claims. Thus, Beck and Giddens both fail to address the question of whether an awareness of global-level risks necessarily equates to a fear of their consequences. As Douglas argued, individuals have a tendency to screen out risks that are not held as central to their purposes. Because everyday life is often confronted with many local-level issues that necessitate attention, it seems unlikely that global-level risks would draw serious concern in day-to-day life. Lupton and Tulloch's studies support this view. This begins to undermine Beck's and Giddens' macro-sociological approach in favour of the position that global-level risks, while threatening in an objective sense, are in fact bracketed out of people's consciousness at the everyday level.

Taking the debate further from the level of theoretical abstraction where it has largely existed until now, this chapter has proposed a study exploring which risks dominate individuals' thinking in Akaroa, a place prone to various global-level risks owing to its dependence on tourism. Considering the tourism industry's vulnerability to risks latent in the global environment, a study of risk as it relates to Akaroa would not only help form an empirically-based critique of the risk literature, but would also help gauge how seriously global risks to tourism are being taken by those who rely on the industry. The benefit of such a study is that it points out the limits of people's risk awareness and lays the groundwork for research on how the effects of global risks upon tourist-dependent areas can be managed.

3. Akaroa Community Profile

3.1. Introduction

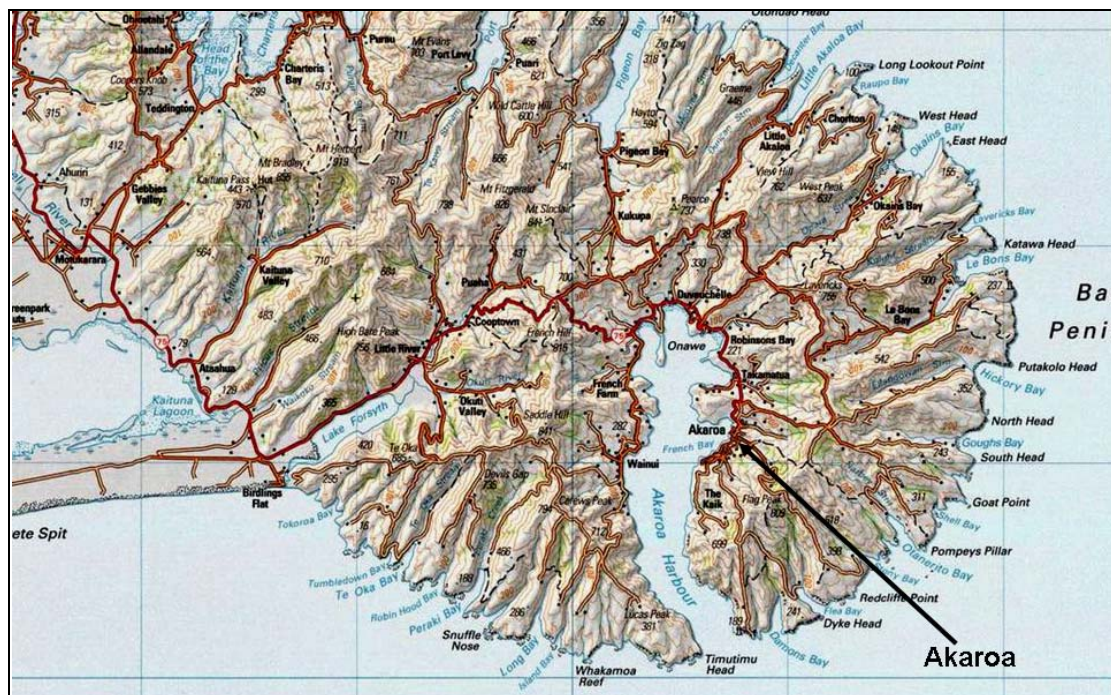
Up to this point, this thesis has outlined a major point of difference in the risk literature and has shown that the risk debate can be applied to tourist-dependent areas. As established in Chapters One, the debate revolves around whether global risks affect a sense of ontological security at the everyday level. On the one hand, Beck and Giddens maintain that not only is the current age extremely threatening owing to the emergence of various global-level risks, but also that lay individuals feel at risk because of the ways in which risk information is conveyed by the media. This theoretical approach presents individuals as both conscious of global risks and fearful of their effects. However, Douglas and Lupton present an alternative position which maintains that the objectivity and scale of risks is secondary to the relevance given to them by people in daily life. This perspective suggests that individuals are selective about risks, paying attention to some while bracketing out others. As opposed to Beck's and Giddens' macro-sociological approaches, Douglas and Lupton therefore maintain a micro-sociological perspective that views risk perception as being contingent on how risks are identified.

In this chapter, the process begins whereby the risk debate is applied to the tourist-dependent community of Akaroa. The chapter begins with an examination of features within Akaroa's built environment, which suggest that the township's economy is significantly dedicated to the tourist market. This leads to a discussion of how tourism became Akaroa's principle economic activity and a study of tourism as the township's economic base. Following this, the chapter examines Akaroa's visitor markets and discusses why being dependent on international tourism makes the township prone to an economic depression. Finally, by examining Akaroa's social makeup and a number of internal issues, the second half of the chapter shows that the township is also subject to local problems. The overall objective of this chapter is to profile Akaroa as a tourist destination and to show it as a place where numerous local issues confront community life.

3.2. Akaroa: At a Glance

Geographically, Akaroa rests at the head of Akaroa Harbour, set within an eroded volcanic crater on Banks Peninsula, approximately 8 kilometres from open sea (see Figure 3.1). Being a mere 82 kilometres from Christchurch, the South Island's largest city, ensures that the town is not entirely remote, but distant enough to exist as a popular holiday location and to form its own distinct sense of place (Lowndes, 1996: 1). Indeed, it is precisely because of Akaroa's proximity to Christchurch that it experiences ongoing success as a tourist destination. This is because Christchurch provides Akaroa with a potential domestic market of approximately 360,000 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b: 14) and is home to the South Island's main international airport, making the city a gateway for international tourists who wish to explore nearby attractions (Shone, Simmons and Fairweather, 2003: 51). In terms of its population, Akaroa is small. According to the most recent Census (2006), the number of permanent residents within Akaroa is 570 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006c). As will be discussed later, this adds to Akaroa's village-like feel which contributes to its popularity.

Figure 3.1 Map of Banks Peninsula Showing Akaroa



Source: Metamedia Limited (2007b) (Scale: 1:200,000 (262)).

The extent to which Akaroa bases itself upon tourism is immediately evident in how the town constructs itself *as* a tourist destination. Apart from its proximity to Christchurch, Akaroa maintains a high visitor profile owing to its unique image. In a world where tourism has become an increasingly vital part of regional and local economies, it has become necessary for destinations to be able to “sell” themselves. With the increasing mobilisation of the global population has come heightened competition within the tourist market. Because of this, there is a need for tourist destinations to create a unique place image in order to promote themselves as desirable travel locations (Urry, 2002: 38). As explained by Thorns (1997: 191), competition between destinations for a share of the tourist market means that local features acquire additional significance and must be promoted in order to guarantee a market share. Akaroa is no exception, modelling itself in a number of ways that further aid its geographical propinquity to Christchurch.

The most discernible feature of Akaroa as a tourist dependent economy is the way it promotes itself as a heritage town with French flair. This is apparent from the town’s large number of preserved, settler period buildings and various allusions to Akaroa’s French origin. This is precisely how Akaroa is marketed on the township’s website, described as “French by Nature” and as “a place to unwind, to wander and soak up times past” (Akaroa District Promotions, 2006). Another noticeable example is the “Frenchification” of the township with the original French names like “Rue Jolie” and “Rue Balguerie” reinstated in 1968, partly as a marketing ploy (Lowndes, 2002: 9) (see Figure 3.2). Restaurants such as “C’est La Vie” (see Figure 3.3) and “Ma Maison” similarly reflect Akaroa’s French image. By theming itself in this way, Akaroa constructs itself as a place that is pleasing to the tourist eye. This exemplifies what Urry (2002) refers to as the construction of the “tourist gaze” in which a series of “signs” or images are created for the aesthetic benefit of the tourists who view them. Important in Akaroa is the façade of being French, as behind the scenes are mostly local people selling local products. The prevalence of such signs throughout Akaroa’s built environment suggests that the township is significantly dedicated to the tourist market.

Figure 3.2 French Street Names



Source: Author (2007).

Figure 3.3 C'est La Vie



Source: Akaroa District Promotions (2007).

3.3. Background

The most recent event of significance to Akaroa's development as a tourist-dependent economy came in the 1980s, when New Zealand went through a series of economic

reforms. Based on a Keynesian economic model,²² New Zealand was for a long time protected from the vicissitudes of the free-market and was one of the more regulated economies in the Western world, relying primarily on Britain as its main trading partner (Neilson, 1998). Under this model of commerce, primary production provided the mainstay for many regions, with agriculture the central economic means for Akaroa, Christchurch and the wider Canterbury area (Shone, Simmons and Fairweather, 2003: 7). However, owing to changes in the global political landscape, such as Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 and the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, New Zealand's economy fell heavily into debt (Chatterjee, 1996: 24). As a solution to New Zealand's economic situation, the fourth Labour Government of 1984-1990 began implementing a series of economic reforms, restructuring the state sector and removing subsidies to agriculture, which exposed exporters to free-market forces (McClure, 2004: 247). Because of increased competition from global markets, primary production went into sharp decline and many jobs were lost amongst New Zealand's rural population (Chatterjee, 1996: 27). In an attempt to alleviate the situation, the government looked to tourism as a catalyst for growth and a solution for unemployment, and began to raise funds for overseas marketing from \$8 to \$15 million after a few months in office (McClure, 2004: 247-251). This led to a rapid influx of international visitors to New Zealand, with a rise from 0.5 million in 1983 to 0.93 million in 1990 (Thorns, 1997: 196). With Akaroa facing a decline in the profitability of primary production and a workforce looking for opportunities outside the district, tourism became a means for the township to stem the outflow of capital investment and labour (Shone, Horn, Moran and Simmons, 2005: 87).

3.4. Economy

3.4.1. Tourism as an Economic Base

Owing to the fourth Labour Government's push to promote New Zealand as a destination, Akaroa has shifted from a township primarily based on agriculture to one where tourism has become its principal economic activity. While current employment

²² Based on the ideas of the 20th century British economist John Maynard Keynes, Keynesian economics promotes the idea of government economic intervention. This contrasts with neo-liberal or laissez-faire economics which promotes the idea that markets can operate effectively on their own, without government intervention (Blinder, n.d.).

figures in tourism are unavailable, the extent of this transition is outlined by Butcher, Fairweather and Simmons in a study entitled *The Economic Impact of Tourism on Christchurch City and Akaroa Township* (2003). In measuring tourism's contribution to employment, Butcher *et al.* (2003: 30) estimated that for the year of 2002 direct employment in tourism was 160 full time equivalents (FTEs) in Akaroa and in other cafes and restaurants nearby. Estimating further that every tourism-centred job generated approximately 0.08 other jobs in the area, Butcher *et al.* concluded that tourism provided a total of 172 FTE jobs in, or close to, the township. Factoring in employment growth, they also calculated that Akaroa's total employment number of 261 FTEs established in the 2001 census had likely grown to about 300 FTEs in 2003. Based on this, they deduced that in 2003 close to 50 per cent of all jobs in the township depended directly on tourism, and more than 50 per cent depended directly or indirectly on tourist spending. This reflects the substantial contribution tourism now makes. However, Butcher *et al.* (2003: viii) also point out that these figures exclude jobs in other areas, such as teaching, that might be lost if tourism went into decline. This suggests that, not only does tourism account for the majority of those employed in Akaroa, it also provides an economic base on which other jobs rely.

Further highlighting Akaroa's transition from agriculture to tourism, Butcher *et al.* (2003: 4) made a comparative analysis of Akaroa's employment share with Christchurch and the rest of Banks Peninsula (see Figure 3.4). Analysing Akaroa's employment by sector in comparison with Christchurch and Banks Peninsula, Butcher *et al.* show that, for the year of 2001, rates of service industry employment in Akaroa were unusually high. This is evident with wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and accommodation accounting for 19.5 per cent, 14.9 per cent and 16.1 per cent of total employment figures respectively. It is interesting to note that agriculture, formerly Akaroa's central economic activity, represented only 5.7 per cent of total employment numbers in 2001. This confirms Akaroa's shift to being a tourist-centred economy.

Figure 3.4 Employment Share by Sector (%) (1991 and 2001)

Industry	Christchurch		Banks Peninsula		Akaroa
	1991	2001	1991	2001	2001
Agriculture	1.8	1.4	17.7	10.8	5.7
Forestry	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0
Fishing & Hunting	0.1	0.1	1.6	0.4	0.0
Mining	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0
Food Manufacture	3.6	2.7	2.0	1.3	0.0
Wood & Paper Products	2.3	1.1	1.3	0.8	0.0
All Other Manufacturing	14.2	12.9	8.8	8.4	4.6
Electricity, Gas & Water	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.0
Construction	6.2	6.2	5.5	4.9	4.6
Wholesale & Retail Trade	18.4	19.1	13.0	13.1	19.5
Restaurants	2.7	3.4	3.5	3.9	14.9
Accommodation	1.6	1.7	3.0	3.3	16.1
Air Transport	1.3	2.6	0.7	1.8	0.0
Transport	4.3	2.3	9.6	4.9	2.3
Communications	2.4	1.6	1.8	0.7	0.0
Business & Prof. Services	12.5	14.6	7.3	13.0	6.9
Recreation and Cultural Services	1.9	2.3	2.8	3.1	4.6
Health & Education	14.4	13.7	12.5	14.3	13.8
All Other Services	12.1	9.5	9.4	9.0	9.2
Unidentified	0.0	4.3	0.0	6.1	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Butcher *et al.* (2003: 4)

3.4.2. International Tourism and the Risk of an Economic Depression

While tourism currently provides Akaroa with a firm economic base, its position as Akaroa's main economic activity also places the township at risk were visitor numbers to decline. Akaroa has been in a similarly precarious position many times before. The first instance came after Akaroa was settled in 1840,²³ when the township's economy first centred on supporting the whaling industry, and shore-bound whalers provided the only means for the township and its inhabitants to provide for themselves (Ogilvie, 1990: 30). Although successful at first, once whaling slowed by the late 1840s, the township's economy suffered and went into a steep decline (Lowndes, 1996: 14; Tremewan, Burrell and Rogers, 1990: 184-185). This occurred again in the 1850s after Akaroa formed a similar reliance on the timber trade (Lowndes, 1996: 18; Fountain, 2002: 78) and repeated in the 1930s and 1940s when woodturning and tweed took similar tumbles (Lowndes, 2002: 11; Fountain, 2002:

²³ For a full commentary on Akaroa's early history and settlement, see Tremewan, P., Burrell, M. and Rogers, M. (1990) *French Akaroa: An Attempt to Colonise Southern New Zealand*.

95). The point is that, through being largely reliant on one form of industry, Akaroa has repeatedly proved itself vulnerable to hardship and depression. This continues now with tourism, and relates primarily to Akaroa's reliance on international tourism, the high-risk sector of the tourist market.²⁴

To this date, Butcher *et al.*'s study *The Economic Impact of Tourism on Christchurch City and Akaroa Township* (2003) is the only recent attempt to quantify the size and economic significance of Akaroa's visitor markets.²⁵ Basing their findings on calculations made from the Ministry of Tourism's International Visitor Survey (IVS), Domestic Tourism Monitor (DTM) and Commercial Accommodation Monitor (CAM), Butcher *et al.* (2003: 20) estimated that, for the year to January 2003, domestic visitors made up roughly 39,000 commercial²⁶ and 68,000 non-commercial nights plus 64,500 day trips. In comparison, they estimated 20,000 commercial and 18,300 non-commercial night-visits plus 55,600 day-visits from international visitors during the same period (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Visitors to Christchurch and Akaroa in Year to January 2003

	Guest nights				Day Visits	
	Commercial		Non-commercial			
	Domestic	International	Domestic	International	Domestic	International
Christchurch	1,339,000	1,539,000	2,487,000	2,857,000	1,741,000	42,000
Akaroa	39,000	20,000	68,000	18,300	64,500	55,600

Source: Butcher *et al.* (2003: 20).

Taken as a general indication of visitor trends, this data suggests that domestic visitors tend to outnumber international visitors by a considerable margin in terms of commercial and non-commercial visitor nights, and by a slight margin in terms of the number of day visits. However, size in numbers is not necessarily a reflection of economic contribution, which is where each market's importance to Akaroa lies.

²⁴ However, Chapter Four will show that Akaroa's domestic market is, in some instances, also subject to the possibility of decline.

²⁵ Although the Ministry of Tourism provides a number of datasets measuring the size of New Zealand's tourist markets which can be accessed through its tourism research website (<http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/Datasets/>), these provide data at the national and regional levels only. Contacting Christchurch and Canterbury Tourism (Canterbury's Regional Tourism Operator) for access to their data, they explained that they also lacked information at this level (pers. com., 2006).

²⁶ Commercial night visitors are defined in the study as those staying in commercial accommodation.

Acknowledging this, Butcher *et al.* conducted a survey of 519 visitors to Akaroa during February 2003 to establish the spending habits of each visitor market. Calculating their findings, they found that international visitors had an overall tendency to spend more (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Expenditure Per Person Per Day Trip and per Night in Akaroa (\$)

	Day trip			Overnight		
	NZ	Other	Total	NZ	Other	Total
Accommodation	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.1	21.1	22.8
Travel (including rental vehicles)	0.1	4.2	1.5	0.3	1.6	0.9
Food and Drink at restaurants, hotels and takeaways;	13.1	13.9	13.6	18.0	17.8	18.1
Entertainment and Activities	12.9	31.7	25.2	10.2	21.4	14.9
Petrol	1.1	2.0	1.7	2.4	3.1	2.8
Other Retail	4.5	13.7	10.5	15.7	14.7	15.6
Miscellaneous	0.4	1.4	1.1	6.8	3.1	5.4
Total (\$ /person /visit or /night)	32.1	66.8	53.5	77.6	82.8	80.4
Number of visitors in Sample	91	164	255	151	113	264

Source: Butcher *et al.* (2003: 18).

Despite being taken from a small sample base during a short period in the busier summer season, these figures suggest that domestic tourists, while greater in number, generally spend less per visit than their international counterparts. Most significantly, these figures appear to show that international day visitors spend twice the amount of domestic day visitors, at least during Akaroa's summer period. Taking into account the indication of Figure 3.5 that international day visitors make up an almost equal share of Akaroa's day market, and that the day market is Akaroa's main market, this suggests that international day visitors generate substantial revenue and are thus indispensable to the township's economy.²⁷

While Butcher *et al.* suggest that international visitors make a substantial economic contribution, their figures are out of date and may be unreflective of the international market's present status. I therefore approached various stakeholders in Akaroa's

²⁷ Although Butcher *et al.* suggest that international visitors contribute significantly to the local economy, they make no mention of which countries comprise Akaroa's international market. However, talking to business owners in the township, a common view is that the composition of the international market changes from year to year.

business community to get their views. The first person I spoke to was “Chris”, a member of Akaroa District Promotions. Questioned on which market contributes most to Akaroa’s economy, Chris said that, while the international market makes up no more than 30 to 50 per cent of the total market, the tendency of international visitors to stay longer than domestic visitors and purchase mementoes of their visit means that businesses tend to rely on them more (personal communication, 2007). Others shared a similar view. “Barbara”, a motel owner, said that the international market made up approximately 60 per cent of her visitors in summer and 10 per cent in the winter, which, she stated, was also reflective of Akaroa as a whole. However, Barbara also explained that international visitors have a tendency to spend more than domestic visitors in either season (pers. com., 2007). The final person I spoke to on this matter was “Avril”, a representative from “Akaroa Dolphins”, who noted that, while international and domestic visitors were approximately even in terms of total visitor numbers, international visitors spend more per visit. When asked about the proportion of each visitor market in relation to her business, Avril said that research conducted by her company had shown that 75 per cent of customers were international (pers. com., 2007). This is also the case with Akaroa’s main eco-tourism enterprise, “Black Cat Cruises”, whose website informs that international tourists have been its main source of business since 1996 (Blackcat Cruises, 2007). This reliance on international visitors suggests that Akaroa would suffer considerably were this market to decline.²⁸

3.5. Social Makeup

While Akaroa’s dependence on tourism leaves it vulnerable to a drop off in visitor numbers, it is also a place where stakeholders are confronted by more common problems. In Chapter Two, Douglas was presented as arguing that individuals have a tendency to create a hierarchy of risks, prioritising some while ignoring others. Upon examining Akaroa’s social makeup, complete with its competing factions and battles for power, it becomes clear that a number of local-level issues could occupy stakeholders’ attention.

²⁸ Anecdotally, participant observation suggests that a significant proportion of international tourists who participate in activities involving the Hector’s Dolphins in Akaroa Harbour are European.

3.5.1. Conflicting Interests

Owing to its popularity as a destination, Akaroa has not only begun to see a greater variety of visitors to the area, it has also started to experience a more diverse range of people choosing Akaroa as a place to reside. Termed “lifestyle migrants”, many of these are people of a creative mind, including a variety of artists, writers and craftspeople who have sought to leave city life for a quiet rural existence (Fountain, 2002: 102-103). Owing to this influx of new residents, various communities within Akaroa began to thrive. However, this also spawned an ideological divide within the township between groups with differing appreciations of Akaroa’s place identity. These groups are detailed in *The Community Matrix of Place*, a model formulated by Fountain in her attempt to detail the web of social relations that exist in Akaroa. This model conceptualises social groups and local relations in Akaroa according to three categories: Rationale for Involvement, Cultural Capital and Belonging Status (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 The Community Matrix of Place

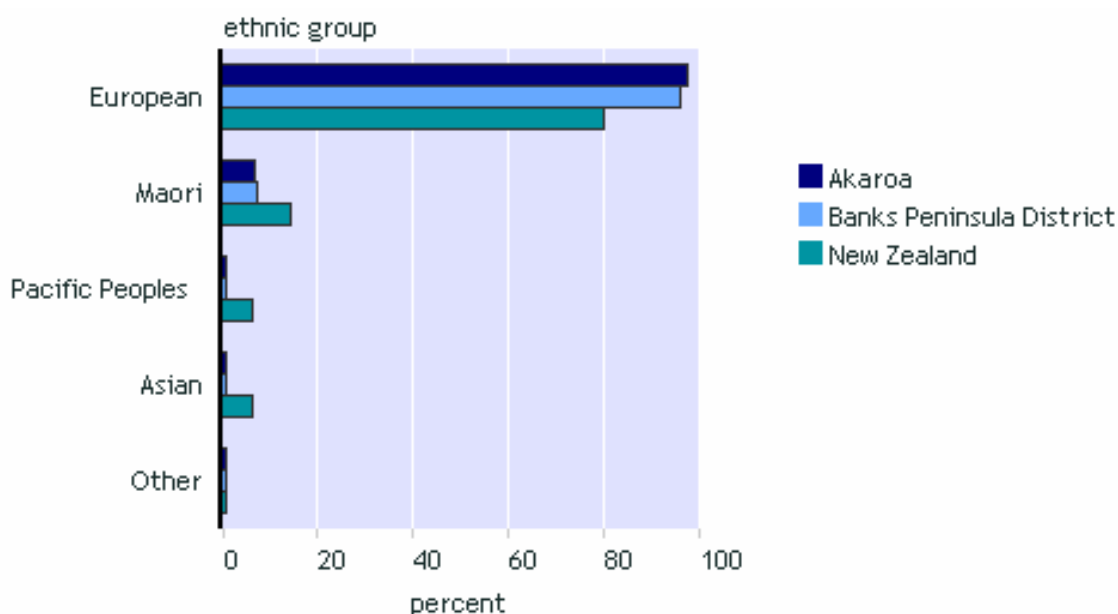
Dimension	Category	View of Akaroa	Representational Power
Rationale for Involvement	<u>Economic Motivation</u> <i>Business Operators</i> <i>Tradespeople, Workers, Farmers.</i>	A Place of Work. A Farming District.	Business operators are in a dominant position to have their view of Akaroa incorporated in tourism strategy through their membership of promotional organisations and dissemination of brochures and websites. Other groups in this category have a limited influence on Akaroa's promotional strategy.
	<u>Leisure Motivation</u> <i>Daytrippers, Holidaymakers, Tourists etc.</i>	A Place of Leisure, Holidays and Recreation.	Through their decision to visit, the activities in which they participate, and their comments about Akaroa, this group are able to reinforce or undermine existing place images and may offer alternative understandings of Akaroa.
	<u>Lifestyle Motivation</u> <i>Lifestyle Residents—e.g. Retirees, 'Alternative Lifestylers'.</i>	A Lifestyle Choice.	By choosing to live in Akaroa based on certain lifestyle qualities, this group reinforce a perspective of place. They act as 'guardians' of their new home to protect these lifestyle qualities from developments which threaten to undermine them.
Cultural Capital	<u>Romantic Perspective</u>	A Place of Peace and Contemplation.	This group demonstrate and reinforce their view of place through their linguistic confidence—letter writing, attending public meetings and joining heritage, cultural and environmental organisations.
	<u>Collective Perspective</u>	A Place of Fun and Sociability.	This group lack linguistic confidence and express their view of place through the activities in which they engage, the places they frequent and the events they attend.
Belonging Status	<u>'Local'</u> <i>People born and bred in the District.</i>	A Place of History and Community.	Locals have rights conferred by their status of belonging and through knowing and experiencing the stories of Akaroa. Their version of place is granted veracity in debate.
	<u>'Non-Local'</u> <i>Insider</i> <i>Outsider</i>	A Place of Appearances, and Recent Experiences.	Insiders have some status of belonging through attachment to Akaroa. Their version of place is granted some authority through knowing some of the stories of place. The version of place expressed by outsiders is granted limited authority and their right to express opinions is questioned by locals.

Source: Fountain (2002: 353).

As Fountain shows, Akaroa is a community marked by difference. While one aspect of this relates to the simple distinction between “locals” and “non-locals”, a major point of difference is ideological and involves the different perspectives between those whose rationale for involvement is primarily economic and those whose rationale is primarily lifestyle orientated. The most visible in the first group are the tourist-business operators and café/restaurant owners along Rue Lavaud, Akaroa's

main street. Fountain explains that for those whose rationale is primarily economic, continuing to live in Akaroa is closely tied to their ability to find employment or business success in the area (2002: 355). For those involved in tourism, this means being able to attract and cater for a growing number of visitors. However, for those in the second group, business development and increasing visitor numbers conflicts with their appreciation of Akaroa for its village-like nature, its heritage and its tranquillity. Within *The Community Matrix of Place*, these people are more likely to hold a “romantic perspective” of Akaroa, appreciating the township more as a place of peace and contemplation. Although those deemed as leisure-motivated largely comprise Akaroa’s tourist market, this group lies outside this study’s interest in risk perception because it does not consist of those with an essential stake in the community. According to the model, those in this group can be identified as “outsiders”, as opposed to more permanent non-locals or “insiders” such as the lifestyle migrants in the community who have an ongoing interest in the area. One group that is not represented in Fountain’s model is Maori. However, this is understandable as, according to the 2001 Census, Maori are significantly under-represented in the area (see Figure 3.8).²⁹

Figure 3.8 Akaroa Ethnic Groups (Census 2001)



Source: Statistics New Zealand (2007a).

²⁹ Although the 2001 is not the most recent Census, demographic data for Akaroa from the 2006 Census was not yet available at the time of writing.

Largely owing to the diversity of interests in Akaroa, an underlying struggle for power pervades community life. As evident in *The Community Matrix of Place*, those with a more permanent stake in the township are generally polarised between those who see it primarily as a place of peace, history and contemplation and those who see it mainly as a place of commerce. The first group generally holds an *idyllic* view of Akaroa, while the second group tend to envisage Akaroa as a place of *potential* in which the township's natural and historical attractions can be harnessed as a means of enterprise and profit. The ideologies of these two groups are fundamentally at odds; one lends itself to the notion of preservation while the other lends itself to the concepts of progress and development. This ideological variance runs right through the community and is the source of ongoing conflict.

3.5.2. Akaroa District Promotions and the Akaroa Civic Trust

At an institutional level, the ideological disparity in Akaroa finds representation in two different organisations. At the local-level, those seen as having commercial interests are largely represented by Akaroa District Promotions (ADP), whose responsibilities include devising strategies to promote tourism in the township. At present, ADP holds an influential position as it represents various tourism-based businesses that form Akaroa's economic base and runs Akaroa's visitor information centre. Representative of those with more lifestyle orientated or "romantic" interests in Akaroa is the Akaroa Civic Trust (ACT), a charitable trust formed in 1969 whose principle objective is based around the preservation of Akaroa's built heritage and the maintenance of the town's historic attractions (Akaroa Civic Trust, 2006). Each organisation, in effect, functions as a lobby-group in which the different values and interests in the community are mobilised. In one sense, each organisation shares a common interest, in that they are both interested in maintaining what they perceive as the attractive features of the town. However, where they differ (as will be explained below) is what they see as being of fundamental importance: the preservation of Akaroa's character versus the desire for economic growth.

3.6. A Web of Conflict

What is evident about Akaroa at this stage is that it is a town of social divisions. While the township's reliance on tourism leaves it exposed to the risk of a major

economic depression, a sense of threat is also formed between those with different views. This begins to frame Akaroa as a place vulnerable to both external events and internal conflict. As this thesis maintains, it is questionable whether global-level risks would cause as much apprehension as Beck and Giddens contend when individuals have other, commonplace issues vying for attention. By examining the various conflicts that exist in the Akaroa township, a clearer view of local-level issues in the community begins to emerge.

3.6.1. Aesthetic Concerns and Akaroa's Place Image

With the ideological divide that pervades the community, it is inevitable that a high degree of local-level discord would arise. Indeed, while tourism has provided Akaroa with an ongoing source of revenue, it has also been the source of substantial conflict and has underlain various debates surrounding issues relating to development and preservation in the region. What is evident when examining points of conflict in the community is that, rather than being concerned with the wellbeing and preservation of Akaroa as a whole, individual groups seem to be more interested in protecting *their* interests. Commenting on this, Fountain (2002: 371) notes that each perspective reflects a constant struggle for whose “version” of Akaroa becomes the main discourse over Akaroa's place identity. At stake here is not the relationship between the community and tourism, but between various groups within the community and their ongoing struggle for power and decision-making at all levels (Shone *et al.* 2005: 103).

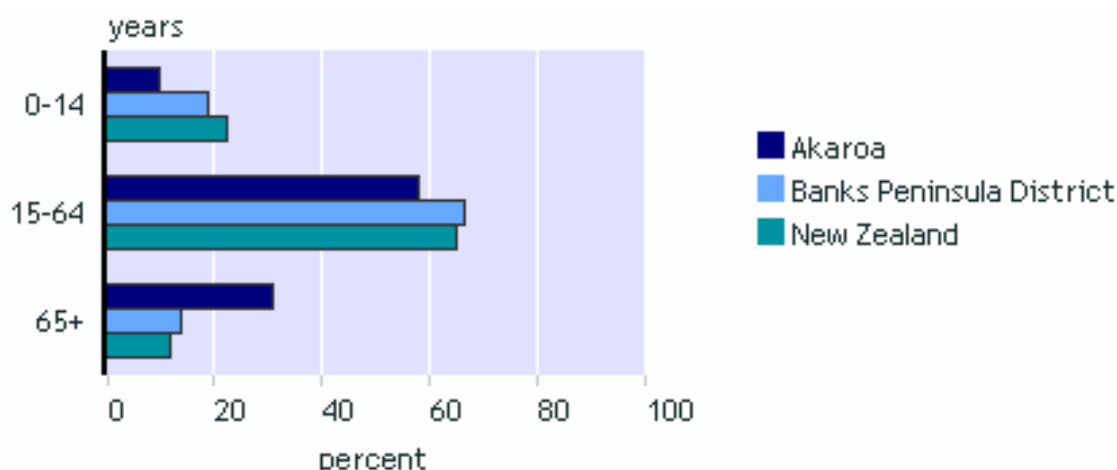
At first glance, the tensions that simmer beneath the surface of community life are most evident in conflicts over new commercial and residential developments within Akaroa's built environment. As stated, many appreciate Akaroa for its natural setting, built heritage and tranquil atmosphere, and choose to reside in the township for these reasons. However, such groups feel threatened if they sense that such qualities are being undermined, creating a degree of tension in the community. This is most apparent with the strong anti-development sentiment amongst many of the township's inhabitants who wish to preserve Akaroa's heritage culture. This is described by Fountain (2002: 236) as the desire to preserve Akaroa's “yester-year charm”.

There are many examples of group-specific tension within the township. The most recent and currently ongoing involves a proposal to establish a set of hot pools on the waterfront, jutting out into Akaroa Harbour. As reported in 'Akaroa spa, pool plan splits resort' in the 1 November 2006 edition of *The Press* (Steward, 2006: 10), the plan put forward by developers is to create a hot pools and spa complex that would reach 33 metres into the ocean on Akaroa's foreshore, set with seven salt-water pools, a café, sauna and massage facilities. While seen by many business owners as a boon for the traditionally slow winter season, the article explains that the proposal has also drawn firm opposition from those who wish to preserve Akaroa's character and image, and are aghast at the thought of further development. Concern surrounding this development highlights the problems that arise in a town that treasures its natural and historic environments but seeks commercial growth.

3.6.2. The Cost of Living and the Depletion of Akaroa's Employment Base

While debates around the preservation of Akaroa's built heritage and natural environment are largely a matter of aesthetics and a sense of historical continuity, an additional point of conflict involves the effect of commercial and residential development on the cost of living. Recent years have seen a boom in residential development, with a number of houses constructed for non-locals who wish to settle in Akaroa post-retirement, enjoy the benefits of a home away from home or purchase real estate with the intent of future financial gain. Retirees now form an especially dominant part of the community (see Figure 3.9). However, such development has led to a high degree of inflation for residential property, placing homes and rental properties outside the price range of many locals in the district (Shone *et al.* 2005: 98).

Figure 3.9 Age Distribution (Census 2001)



Source: Statistics New Zealand (2007a).

Compounding financial matters for many residents has been the impact of visitor growth on Akaroa's fragile infrastructure. Owing to its small population, the township's infrastructure was initially devised to handle those permanently resident, a population of approximately 600. However, as the population swells during the summer months, with various holiday-home owners, backpackers, day-trippers and overnight guests, numbers can reach as many as 3000 and the town's infrastructure struggles to cope (Cullen, Dakers, McNichol, Meyer-Hubbert, Simmons and Fairweather, 2003: 1). Of most concern has been the impact such numbers have had upon the water and sewerage systems. Although New Zealand's general push towards tourism has resulted in visitor growth in Akaroa, the township's water and wastewater systems have remained the same. This has led to the continual need for upgrades to meet demand, the cost of which is relayed to local residents (Cullen *et al.* 2003: 2). Combined with the costs from higher property values, this has created a situation in which Akaroa has become affordable mainly to those in a high-income bracket. This has led to many families moving out of Akaroa, causing the depletion of Akaroa's employment base (Shone *et al.*, 2005: 98). An examination of population trends within Akaroa between 1996 and 2006 in relation to those in Banks Peninsula and New Zealand substantiates this (see Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10 Akaroa Usually Resident Population Count 1991-2006

	1991	1996	2001	2006
Akaroa	606	642	576	570
Banks Peninsula	6,984	7,581	7,833	8,172
New Zealand	3,434,952	3,681,546	3,829,759	4,143,279

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2007b).

3.6.3. Anti-Development Sentiments

While various groups in Akaroa feel aggrieved over the environmental and financial effects of tourist and residential development, the business community is equally bothered by the strong anti-development sentiments that pervade the town. In many respects, Akaroa's business community feels that the town needs ongoing commercial development in order to draw more numbers during Akaroa's traditionally slower winter months. As a member of the ADP informed me, while the summer months bring the majority of visitors to the town, the off-season between April and October sees a sharp downturn in visitor numbers and, subsequently, the amount of trade. While visitor numbers in the summer months present an enormous strain on the community and its resources, the ADP member explained that visitor troughs bring their own concerns, with business getting so low for some that they are forced to consider reducing staff numbers. This, he explained, is partly why Akaroa's business community are behind such ventures as the hot pools, for they believe that such operations will help boost falling sales during this period (pers. com., 2006).

Those who perceive the need for continued commercial growth within Akaroa find themselves continually hindered by sections of the community who actively protest against many such proposals. This has proven to be a thorn in the side for those who seek to expand Akaroa's commercial base. The problems that arise for the business community often relate to the legislative requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). One of the essential aspects of the RMA, and one which often causes problems for developers, is that it allows individuals and community groups to become involved in the resource consent process (Ministry for the Environment, 2007). This gives members of the community a chance to vocalise their concerns over any new developments in their vicinity. Consequently, a major hurdle for developers

in receiving consent is often that many in Akaroa take advantage of the RMA by making appeals against new commercial ideas. The tension created by this is exemplified by an incident involving former community board member and local business owner, Eric Ryder, in October 2003. Incensed at what he perceived as continued meddling by local groups over waterfront redevelopment plans, causing the Community Board to spend thousands on resource consent costs, Ryder staged his own protest by cutting down two of the town's landmark shoreline trees, a native Pohutukawa and a 100-year-old Norfolk Pine. Outraged that various small groups within the community had been holding up development, Ryder wanted to send a clear message to those who he believed were interfering for argument's sake (Warren, 2003: 11). Ryder's actions illustrate that community tensions in Akaroa can at times reach boiling point.

3.6.4. Political Issues

It is important to note that while inter-group conflicts are numerous in Akaroa, not all debates within the community can be categorised as being between those who are commercially and lifestyle orientated. One example relates to the amalgamation between the Banks Peninsula District Council (BPDC) and the Christchurch City Council (CCC). Traditionally, Akaroa has always had some degree of self-governance. When the BPDC was formed in 1989, there were ten elected councillors, split between the Akaroa-Wairewa and Lyttelton-Mount Herbert wards. Community boards were also established under each council to deal with issues arising out of the local community (Lowndes, 1996: 21). This formation provided a high degree of representation for those at the local-level and a chance for residents to have their concerns heard. However, owing to the lack of funding available to the BPDC to tackle such problems as the need to upgrade Akaroa's waste-water systems, a petition was launched by residents of the Banks Peninsula District in 1997 to amalgamate the BPDC with the CCC. This drew strong criticism and contestation in Akaroa even after the merger was finalised in November 2005 (Fountain, 2002: 150-151; Lamm, 2005). This was largely because Akaroa residents felt that such a move would see Akaroa lose its unique identity and become governed by a political body unsympathetic to local needs ('Amalgamation means 'Lost Voice'', 1999: 6). However, others in the community felt that problems facing Akaroa were no longer solvable by the BPDC and that without the merger, rates would spiral out of control

(‘Amalgamation’, 1997: 2). Instead of being divided down the lines of business versus lifestyle, the amalgamation issue divided Akaroa between those whose values sought the protection of Akaroa’s autonomy and identity and those who demanded a practical solution to issues and concerns that could no longer be solved at the local-level. This shows that while Akaroa is divided over issues relating to development, other issues also fracture the community.

3.7. Conclusion

By examining tourism as Akaroa’s principle economic activity and through exploring the tensions created from being a popular tourist destination, this chapter has presented Akaroa as both susceptible to an economic depression and as a place where local problems pervade community life. At a glance, Akaroa’s dependence on tourism is observable through how it promotes itself *as* a tourist destination, with numerous settler period buildings and French themed streets. More telling, however, is the extent to which tourism provides a base for employment, with the industry accounting directly for approximately 50 per cent of the working population and, indirectly, for many more. This suggests that a significant visitor decline would have a dramatic effect, causing widespread unemployment and devastating hardship. Because Akaroa relies heavily on the high-risk international market for its economic contribution, such a scenario could ensue from disruptions in international travel flows. This begins to show Akaroa as vulnerable to global events.

Although Akaroa’s dependence on tourism leaves it susceptible to an economic decline, Chapter Three has also shown that Akaroa is a place where members of the community are confronted by a barrage of everyday problems, owing largely to the pressures caused by being a successful holiday destination. This is most obvious with the ideological divide between those who seek to capitalise on tourism and others who desire the preservation of Akaroa’s built heritage and village-like charm. It is also evident with Akaroa’s popularity as a holiday destination causing it to become a more expensive place to live, resulting in a population decline. In the context of the risk debate, this begins to paint the township as an area where both global and local issues are relevant to people’s lives. This sets the scene for a much broader analysis of Akaroa, one that acknowledges the types of global risks that place its economy and its inhabitants at threat.

4. Akaroa and the Global Risk Environment

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter Three, Akaroa's economy, tourist industry and social makeup were examined to form an understanding of the various local-level issues within the township as well as to illustrate its vulnerability were its visitor market to decline. In this chapter, an understanding is presented of the kinds of global risks that could undermine Akaroa's tourist industry in the future. While Akaroa exists as an autonomous locality in its own right, viewed from afar the town can be conceived as dependent upon and intricately connected to a globalised world with its own set of risks. The first perspective sees Akaroa as a self-enclosed and geographically situated unit of social and economic commerce, while the latter view sees Akaroa as a participant in a world of global flows and exchange. This is made clear in light of Akaroa's position as a tourist dependent economy, where various global strands, in the form of international visitors and global cash flows, meet. It is by participating in this global environment that Akaroa is exposed to global-level dangers. Acknowledging this, Chapter Four contributes to the overall thesis by examining a number of risks that constitute a global climate of threat within which Akaroa and its inhabitants are vulnerable. Chapter Four aims then to present an empirical view of the global risk environment and its potential effects upon tourism at the local-level. In the context of the risk debate, an examination of global threats posed to those with a stake in Akaroa not only provides insight into the risk society theories of Beck and Giddens as they apply to tourism, it also provides a reference point from which to gauge risk sentiments in the township, which is the focus of Chapter Five.

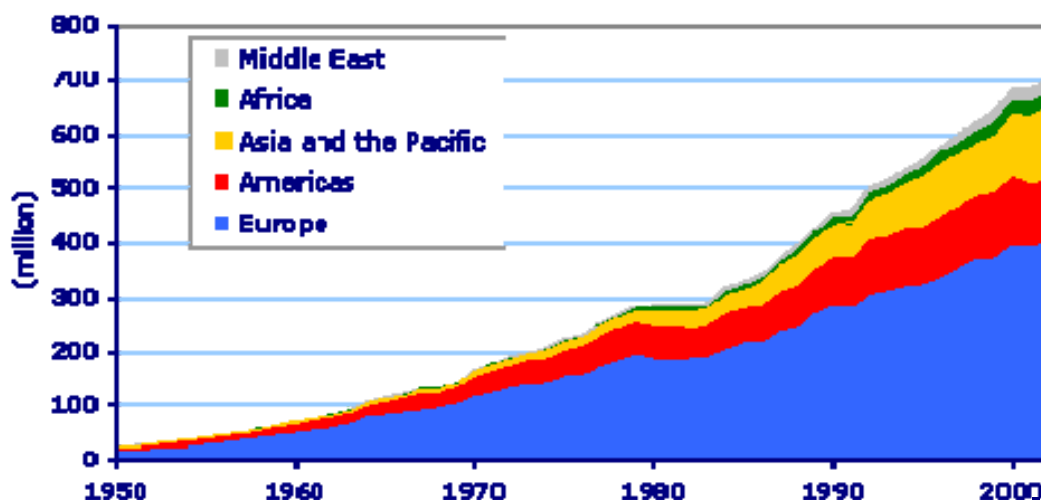
4.2. Globalisation, Tourism and Risk

4.2.1. The Influence of Globalisation

Being dependent on tourism, Akaroa has come to rely on one of the most prominent facets of globalisation, global human mobility. The degree to which the world has become increasingly mobile is reflected in the way international tourism has boomed as a worldwide industry. Previously limited by the means to travel vast distances, advances in aviation technology and the advent of commercialised aviation has meant

that international travel has become much easier, less time consuming and more affordable for the general population (Lavery, 1987: 24). This is reflected in figures held by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) showing a rise in international tourist arrivals worldwide from approximately 25 million in 1950 to about 700 million in 2002 (see Figure 4.1).³⁰

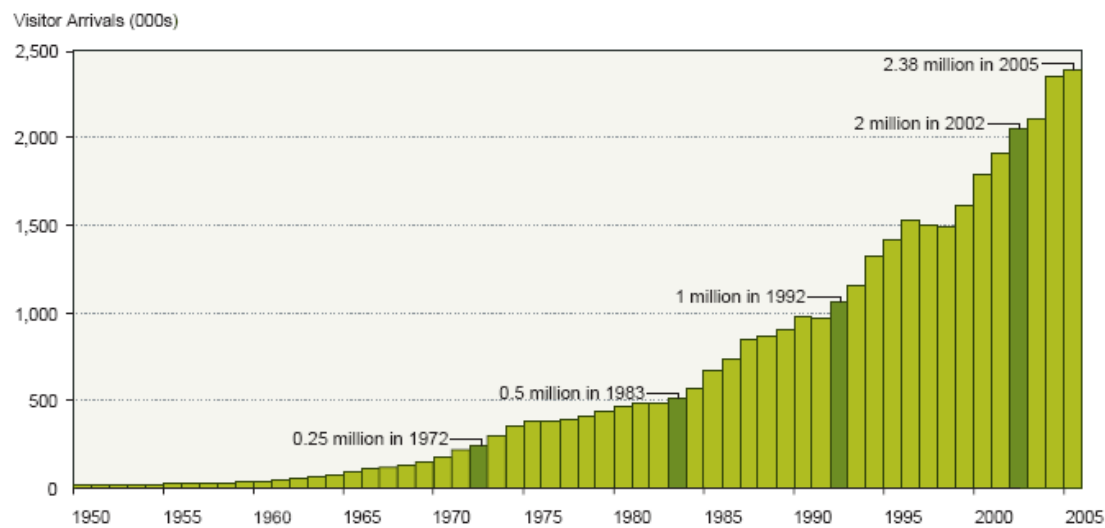
Figure 4.1 International Tourist Arrivals 1950-2004



Source: UNWTO (2007a).

Playing a prominent role in the compression of the global-local divide for travellers in this respect was the introduction of jet aircraft in the 1950s and the wide-bodied jumbo jet (such as the Boeing 747) in the 1970s (Collier and Harraway, 2001: 24). New Zealand itself entered the jet-age in 1963 when the airline BOAC began running its Comet jet service from London, linking New Zealand directly with Britain (McClure, 2004: 204). The arrival of these forms of aviation not only shortened the time it took to travel long distances, it also reduced the cost of travel, allowing countries like New Zealand to benefit from a rapid increase of numbers to its shores (Perkins and Thorns, 2001: 195). This is shown in international visitor arrival statistics to New Zealand between 1950 and 2005 (see Figure 4.2):

³⁰ Such growth has continued, with the latest UNWTO figures showing a record 842 million people had travelled abroad in 2006 (UNWTO, 2007b).

Figure 4.2 International Visitor Arrivals to New Zealand 1950-2005

Source: Ministry of Tourism (2006: 7).

Such exponential growth in international visitors shows how New Zealand has benefited from the advent of a more globally mobile world. However, reliance on this facet of globalisation also makes New Zealand tourism and the tourist-dependent township of Akaroa susceptible to events that could undermine global aviation travel. As opposed to countries like Germany or France for instance, New Zealand's geographical isolation means that it relies upon air travel to bring international visitors to its shores (see Figure 4.3). Were commercial aviation to New Zealand affected by some unforeseen event, it is certain that tourism in New Zealand and in tourist-dependent areas like Akaroa would decline. As noted by Collier and Harraway (2001: 24-25):

[I]f the air transportation industry were to collapse owing to some form of world catastrophe, then it is almost certain that the majority of world tourism would collapse with it. This is particularly relevant to countries such as New Zealand where nearly 98% of all international visitors arrive by air.

It is within this context that Akaroa's vulnerability can be understood. As Akaroa has come to benefit from New Zealand's participation in a world marked by global population exchange, it is also prone to events that may destabilise global tourism

flows.³¹ This engenders a different understanding of Akaroa, not just as an independent social and spatial entity, but as a node within and reliant upon a global network of exchange. Here, Akaroa as a “place” becomes porous, subject to outside spheres of influence. Massey (1993: 66) conceptualises such places as “extra-verted” in that they are fundamentally connected to and constructed by a number of links to the wider world. In other words, while Akaroa appears as a separate and independent unit of social and economic interaction, it in fact relies on relations that transcend spatial division. The corollary of such interdependence is that the township is rendered susceptible to the influence of global forces. This is elucidated by Giddens (1990: 18-19):

In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the “visible form” of the locale conceals the distanced relations which determine its nature.

The point here is that while Akaroa is bound up with its own internal politics and workings, it is also integrally linked to and reliant on the world around it. By being dependent on international aviation to facilitate international tourist arrivals, Akaroa is subject to a number of globalised risks that have the potential to undermine tourist flows to all parts of the world. Because of this, the security of the township depends significantly on events that lie outside its immediate vicinity. However, the question is whether this bears upon stakeholders’ thinking.

³¹ Akaroa also receives a number of international visitors each year travelling by cruise liner, with 10 visits from three liners in 2006. However, the manager of Akaroa’s visitor information centre explained to me that while three years ago these visitors were mostly high-spending Americans who generated a lot of revenue, today they are mostly visitors from Australia and other parts of New Zealand who spend significantly less (pers. com., 2007).

Figure 4.3 An Example of New Zealand's Air Connections Showing Air New Zealand's Global Links

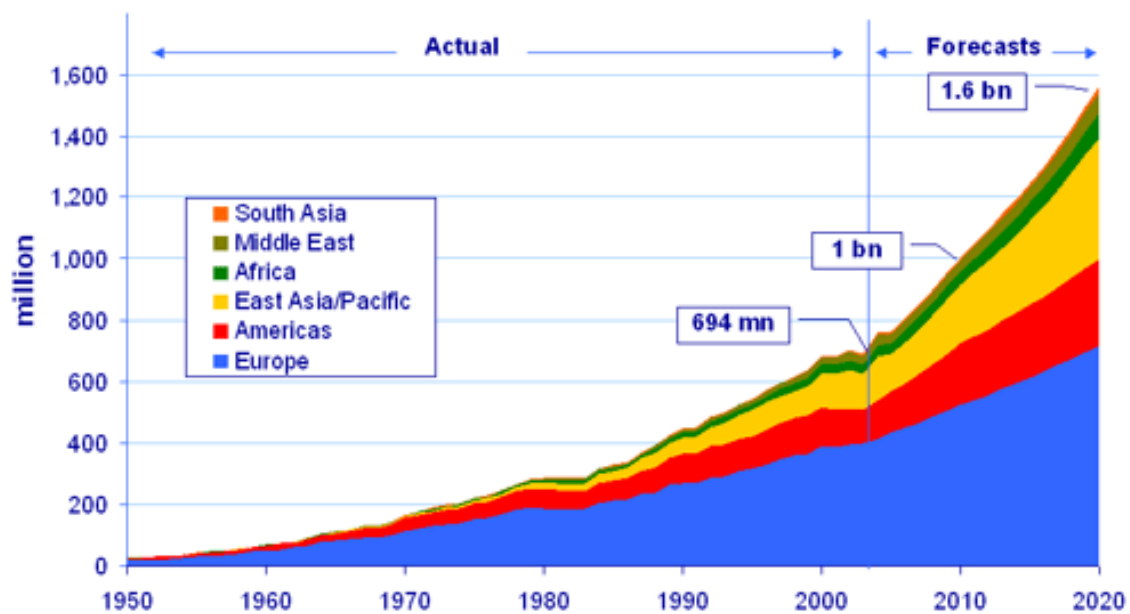


Source: www.airlineroutemaps.com (n.d.).

4.2.2. A False Confidence

Despite the global risk environment, there appears to be a climate of confidence at the highest levels of the tourism industry, which is reflected in forecasts for tourism growth. What is noteworthy about how many tourist organisations forecast tourism growth is that they rely on historical trends. The UNWTO, for instance, base their forecasts for total international arrivals worldwide upon historical cycles of growth and decline (UNWTO, 2007a). Based upon such patterns, the UNWTO forecast that worldwide international arrivals will reach 1.6 billion by the year 2020 (see Figure 4.4).

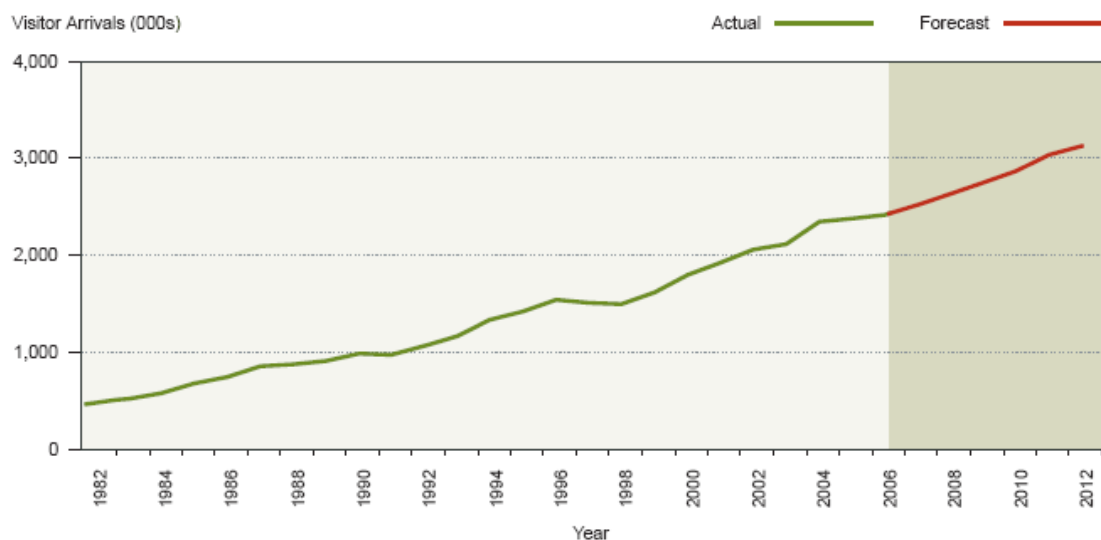
Figure 4.4 Worldwide Tourist Arrival Forecasts to 2020



Source: UNWTO (2007c).

A similar method is used for forecasting future international visitors to New Zealand, with the Ministry of Tourism forecasting international arrivals to reach 3.1 million by 2012 (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Forecast International Arrivals to New Zealand to 2012



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2006: 15).

However, the limitation of this method is that it fails to account for variables that may affect forecast accuracy. Upon contact with the Ministry of Tourism's senior research

analyst, Mike Chan, he informed me that the current trend model used to forecast tourism growth by the Ministry of Tourism does not incorporate variables that stem from global threats as there is no accurate way to do so (pers. com., 2006). Consequently, forecasts may become too optimistic and ignore possible future threats to the industry. The danger is that, because global risks are not easily calculable, they will simply be overlooked. At present, tourism forecasts rely on patterns and predictability. The problem with global risks is that they are often *unpredictable* and defy expectation. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the global SARS pandemic are testament to this. Therefore, despite present forecasts of tourism growth in New Zealand, there is always the possibility that growth patterns could be interrupted, perhaps severely. This warrants an analysis of the risks that could have such an effect.

4.3. Climate Change

4.3.1. The Climate Change Risk

The most topical risk to tourism in New Zealand at present is that of climate change. Since former US Vice-President Al Gore released the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* in early 2006 and Sir Nicholas Stern released the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* later the same year, climate change has become a searing issue in political debates and has become recognised as one of the main threats to many countries ('Blair lays bare global dangers', 2006: B2). The claims made by both Gore and Stern are alarming. In *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006a), Gore argues that owing to the large quantities of human-generated carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are thickening the thin layer of atmosphere surrounding the planet, the Earth and its oceans are beginning to warm up. Because of this, he argues humanity is now sitting on the edge of a global disaster, with just ten years to avert a tail-spin of destruction of epic proportions, involving floods, droughts and epidemics on a scale beyond anything history has previously encountered. Claims made by Gore (2006b: 80) in the book version of the documentary suggest that the emergence of category five hurricanes like Hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in 2005 are testament to global warming's catastrophic potential. In the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, Stern paints a similarly grim picture, arguing that the effects of climate change could push the world into the worst economic recession

since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Stern, 2006: 151). Each has raised a general awareness of climate change and has attempted to elicit action on the issue.

4.3.2. The Environmental Impact of Long-Haul Air Travel

The threat climate change poses to New Zealand tourism is twofold and relates to climate change's direct and indirect consequences. A point made by Stern (2006: 172) is that one of the major contributors to global warming is the carbon output of international aviation, both in the form of global exporting and commercial air travel. Following Stern's claims, speculation as to the environmental sustainability and future viability of international travel to New Zealand became rife. The problem identified is that, as a long-haul destination, international travel to New Zealand generates considerable amounts of carbon and is thus an activity that is further contributing to the degradation of the environment. In a world where environmental preservation has become an increasingly important social issue, concern has mounted that international air travel to New Zealand will no longer be a desirable, socially acceptable or environmentally sustainable practice.

Fears over the impact climate change may pose to tourism in New Zealand have surfaced with a flurry of media reports. Among the first to raise such concerns was an article that appeared in *The Press* in November 2006 entitled 'Green fears for tourism' (Hann, 2006: A4). The article explains that growing environmental awareness worldwide was likely to threaten New Zealand's place as a top destination because of the environmental impact of travelling to a place so geographically remote. The article also cited Tourism New Zealand's Chief Executive George Hickton who explained that the onus is on New Zealand to ensure that tourists are not dissuaded from coming to the country as climate change becomes a more mainstream issue. The article was quickly followed by a flood of similar reports. In December 2006, Wellington-based social research group The Providence Report released *Code Green* (2006), a report examining the links between the environment, sustainability and climate change in New Zealand. In light of climate change, The Providence Report argued that Tourism New Zealand's '100 per cent pure' marketing campaign (see Figure 4.6) to lure tourists to New Zealand will likely end up being counter-productive as governments and consumers worldwide begin to focus on the contribution that air travel makes to the current climate crisis. The findings of this research were widely publicised,

spawning television coverage on TV3's 'Campbell Live' current affairs programme (Campbell and Leary, 2006) and newspaper reports such as 'Heat rising on NZ's sales pitch' in the 10 January 2007 edition of *The Press* (Allen, 2007: C3).

Figure 4.6 '100% Pure New Zealand'



Source: Tourism New Zealand (2007a).

The concerns raised in these reports laid the foundation for the climate change issue becoming firmly entrenched in the early months of 2007, with similar articles appearing frequently thereafter. On 26 February 2007, another article appeared in *The Press* entitled 'NZ tourism under threat', which cites Air New Zealand chief executive Rob Fyfe admitting that rising environmental awareness amongst travellers is posing "a real threat" to New Zealand's tourist industry and economy. The article also cites Fyfe explaining that environmentalists are now labelling airlines "the new tobacco companies" because of the industry's high fuel use (Van Den Bergh, 2007: 2). More recently, publicity over this risk to tourism hit the front page of a March 2007 edition of the *New Zealand Listener*, one of New Zealand's foremost current affairs magazines, with the sub-headline: 'Will the war on climate change kill our trade and tourism?' (see Figure 4.7). Inside, an article entitled 'Flight or Fright' states that calls to reduce international travel in light of climate change could have "dire

consequences” for the future of tourism within New Zealand owing to the country’s dependence on its air links with the rest of the world (Nippert, 2007: 20).

Figure 4.7 ‘Will the war on climate change kill our trade and tourism?’



Source: *New Zealand Listener* (March 3-9, 2007).

The common point for each of these reports is the fear that long-haul travel to New Zealand will become a thing of the past. If an aversion to long-haul travel was to manifest itself, this would have flow-on effects for Akaroa and other tourist-dependent areas in New Zealand. As mentioned in relation to the study conducted by Butcher *et al.* (2003) in Chapter Three, a major decline in visitors to Akaroa would lead to high levels of unemployment and thus widespread economic hardship. Given the media attention this risk has received, the risk society approach would assume that it would be of high concern in the minds of Akaroa’s stakeholders.

4.3.3. Direct Consequences

While climate change threatens to expose New Zealand’s reliance on commercial air travel, another area of concern is the possible *direct* impacts that climate change may have on tourist attractions. While this is not yet a reality for New Zealand tourism operators, in light of the effect climate change is having on tourism in other countries,

this remains a distinct possibility. One country of note here is Australia, where climate change is beginning to present a huge threat to some of the country's main tourist attractions and activities. In the 5 February 2007 edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, an article entitled 'Climate change No.1 reef threat: experts' reported that climate change was beginning to cause damage to the Great Barrier Reef, one of Australia's principal tourist attractions. The article noted that this was also a broader concern as visitors to the reef contribute approximately AUD\$4 billion to the Australian economy each year. Similar concerns were raised again in the paper two days later with the article 'Drought threatens tourism industry' (2007) reporting that Australia's current climate change-induced drought has developed into the most important issue facing the tourism industry in regional Australia at present. The article continued that, because of the severity of the drought, touted as the worst in 1,000 years, popular tourist activities such as water-skiing, white water rafting and fishing on major natural attractions such as the Murray River³² were no longer an option for local tourism operators. Such examples indicate that climate change, while already making the future of long haul international travel look uncertain, poses a direct threat to many of the features that help inspire people to travel internationally. While this is not yet a reality for New Zealand, the possibility has been presented in the media with articles such as 'Franz Josef Glacier Melting' (2007) from Fairfax's news website stuff.co.nz reporting that one of New Zealand's main tourist attractions, the Franz Josef Glacier, is melting away owing to the influence of climate change. Were climate change to continue affecting New Zealand's natural attractions in this way, it is possible that the country would lose many of its alluring features.

4.4. Peak Oil

4.4.1. A Threat to Global Mobility

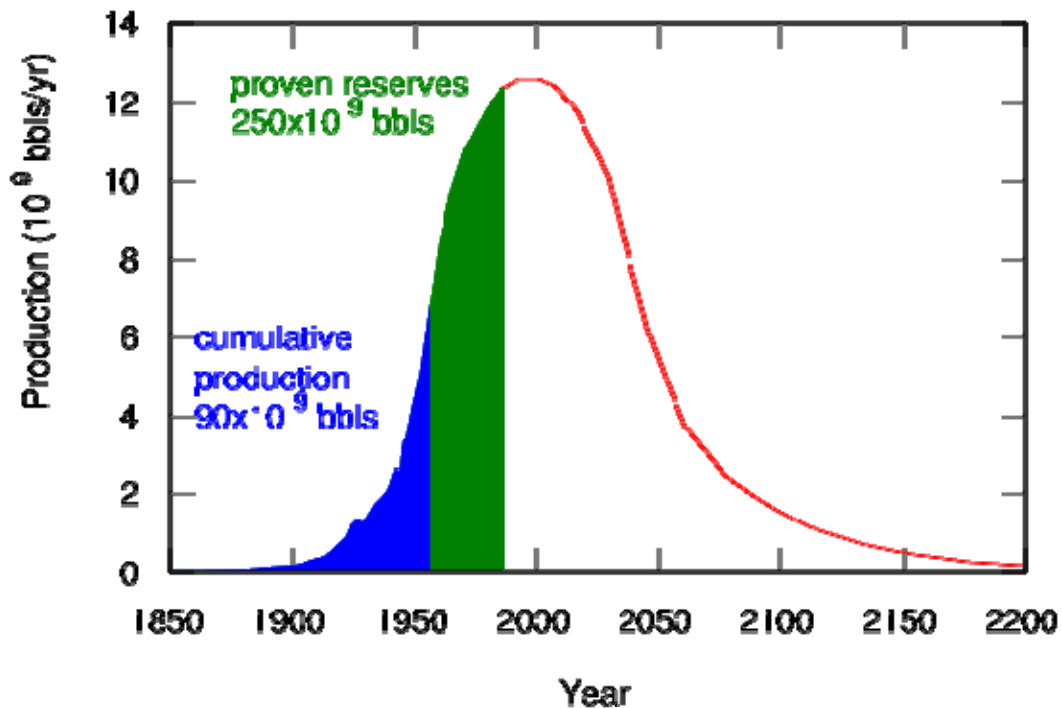
While the threat climate change poses to tourism rests on the direct and indirect consequences of the combustion of fossil fuels such as oil, peak oil presents a threat to Akaroa precisely because it involves the imminent *depletion* of oil, the substance on which global tourism and transport depends. While commercial aviation has provided the means for tourism to become one of the world's most prominent industries, the process of travel itself depends upon the consumption of a cheap and readily available

³² The Murray River borders New South Wales and Victoria.

supply of oil (Sibson, 2006). Because oil is by nature finite, logic determines that its continuous use will, one day, lead to its exhaustion. The problem for tourism in New Zealand and for Akaroa in particular, however, is that this point may now be near.

The term “peak oil” has been around for many years but became popularised in 1956 when Shell Oil geologist and petro-chemical expert M. King Hubbert accurately predicted that US oil production would peak in the early 1970s. Although his theory was discounted by mainstream opinion, it was proved correct when, in the mid 1970s, US production began to fall (Deffeyes, 2001: 1-2). The concept of peak oil itself is founded on the notion that all oil production follows a curve (see Figure 4.8). Following the upslope, oil reserves are plentiful and production costs are low. On the down-slope however, oil supplies are scarce and extra effort and expense is required to exhume oil from reserves that are in depletion. This denotes a situation where oil is at first abundant but, with continued extraction, becomes increasingly difficult and financially inefficient to extract. “Peak oil” itself refers to the peak of the curve, where the global supply of oil has been depleted by 50 per cent. Once the peak is passed, the cost of oil begins to rise (Ruppert and Hecht, 2004, 29-31). This means that the amount of oil available to global markets will eventually decline while the costs paid for the oil, relayed from higher cost of extraction, will increase.

Figure 4.8 A Demonstrative Example of Peak Oil



Source: Wikipedia (2007).

The worrisome point for tourism, and places like Akaroa that depend on tourism, is that predictions suggest that peak oil is rapidly approaching. Leslie Haines, in researching the debate about peak oil in a 2006 article for *Oil and Gas Investigator*, compiled a list of peak oil predictions by various oil industry experts and organisations and found a general consensus that peak oil is near. Alarmingly, many predict oil to peak around 2010-2020 with even the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), traditionally the most optimistic about the world's supply of oil, listing its best-case scenario as 2050 (Haines, 2006: 151). The issue at the centre of such predictions, argues Haines, is that global oil consumption trends have become unsustainable, as many of the world's major oil fields have reached the point where nearly all of their easily extractable oil has been used. Because of this, she continues, new discoveries are desperately needed if current consumption trends are to be maintained (2006: 150). However, as Heinburg (2006: 19) explains, global oil discovery rates have been in decline since the 1960s, and now approximately one barrel of oil is being discovered for every five being used. Salameh, in his article 'A Third Oil Crisis?' (2001), argues that because of the widening gap between supply

and demand that is resulting from high consumption trends, falling rates of oil discovery and the depletion of oil reserves, the current oil-dependent way of life is no longer sustainable. Owing to this, he concludes, we now have a crisis in the making.

4.4.2. Implications for Tourism in New Zealand

Despite the inevitability of peak oil, there has been little research on its implications for tourism in New Zealand. This is surprising considering both New Zealand's economic dependence on tourism and the fact that the country's position as a long-haul destination necessitates a high dependency on oil. With work into the peak oil threat recently conducted by Dr. Susanne Becken from Lincoln University and published in a report entitled *Managing tourism in the face of peak oil* (2007), however, the issue is finally getting some of the attention it deserves. In the report, Becken presents some alarming information. She begins by noting that while tourism forecasts optimistically predict continued growth worldwide, doubt is cast on their accuracy because a decline in oil production is imminent, and typically estimated to occur between 2010 and 2020 (2007: 3). Once a peak in oil production does occur, she explains, the price of oil will escalate rapidly. The corollary of this for global tourism, she reports, is that tourist travel will become more expensive and tourists will find it difficult to visit certain destinations (ibid: 6). Because New Zealand is geographically remote from most of its source markets, aside from Australia, Becken explains that it is especially dependent on oil to bring tourists to its shores and then back to their country of origin, and is thus particularly vulnerable once oil production finally peaks (ibid: 15). Most concerning in Becken's report is her contention that, in the worst-case scenario, oil depletion will be so severe that the resource will be available only for life-supporting industries, meaning that industries like tourism and travel will miss out when it comes to oil allocation (ibid: 22). At the extreme, Becken suggests that for some destinations this could mean the end of international tourism (ibid: 22).

Further insight into the threat of peak oil and its repercussions for tourism in New Zealand was made possible upon contacting Dr Becken. Speaking of the worst-case scenario for New Zealand, Becken explained that tourist arrivals to New Zealand would drop substantially, and those who are still able to visit New Zealand will inevitably have less disposable funds left to spend while they are in the country.

Furthermore, she explained that another consequence of peak oil might be that domestic tourism is also affected, making it more expensive to travel within New Zealand. However, Becken noted that the full dynamic of this is not yet known and it is also possible that a reduction in New Zealanders travelling internationally may see domestic tourism rise in New Zealand. However, in the most extreme situation, Becken pointed out that *all* non-essential travel would reduce substantially. This could mean that Akaroa's traditionally strong domestic market might be at risk as travelling the 82 kilometres from Christchurch (164 kilometres return) for a day-trip may become an activity few could afford. Finally, Becken pointed out that a transition towards alternative, non-oil energy sources would take at least 10 years, meaning that a move from oil dependency to alternative forms of energy is needed *now*. However, she explained that if we have already reached peak oil production, then humanity will not be able to make this transition in time, incurring severe consequences for tourism in the near future (pers. com., 2007). In other words, although there might be technological solutions to oil depletion, their effect may depend on when oil production peaks.

4.4.3. Geopolitical Issues

Another point of relevance to come out of both Becken's study and our personal communication is that the majority of the world's oil reserves are located in politically unstable areas such as the Middle East. This means that, even if oil production was not to peak for another 10 or 20 years, major political unrest in areas that produce the majority of the world's oil could cause a disruption in global oil supplies and thus may create an artificial peak oil situation. In her study, Becken gives the example of the 1973 and 1979 oil shocks as cases where fluctuations in oil prices resulted from political tensions in the Middle East rather than declining reservoirs (2007: 4). For others who have written about peak oil, such as Ronald Bailey, the question of when oil production will peak is in fact secondary to issues that relate to where the world's main oil reserves are located. In 'Peak Oil Panic' (2006), Bailey argues that what poses the most immediate threat to humanity's oil dependent way of life is not that world oil supplies are in decline, but that the majority of what is left lies in the custody of politically unstable and often hostile regimes (2006: 24). The oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 exemplify this as they occurred when political conflict within a number of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) states resulted in a

massive reduction in oil production (Kennaway, 2002; Salameh, 2001), and caused prices for petroleum worldwide to soar (Campbell, 2002: 194; Verleger, 1979: 463).

The problem that exists today, as in the 1970s, is that there is little oil outside OPEC control and the oil that does exist is scarce and near depletion. This poses many difficulties for global energy security, as OPEC is comprised of many states that are traditionally unsympathetic to Western interests. One author who is clear on this is Paul Roberts in *The End of Oil* (2004). Roberts (2004: 59) argues that, while it is a fact that all oil reserves are in decline, the oil that is not controlled by OPEC is expected to peak first. This, he explains, gives OPEC liberty to push their prices higher. This means that if OPEC members were to reduce oil production owing to political tension with the West, as happened in 1973 and 1979, another artificial peak oil situation may ensue.

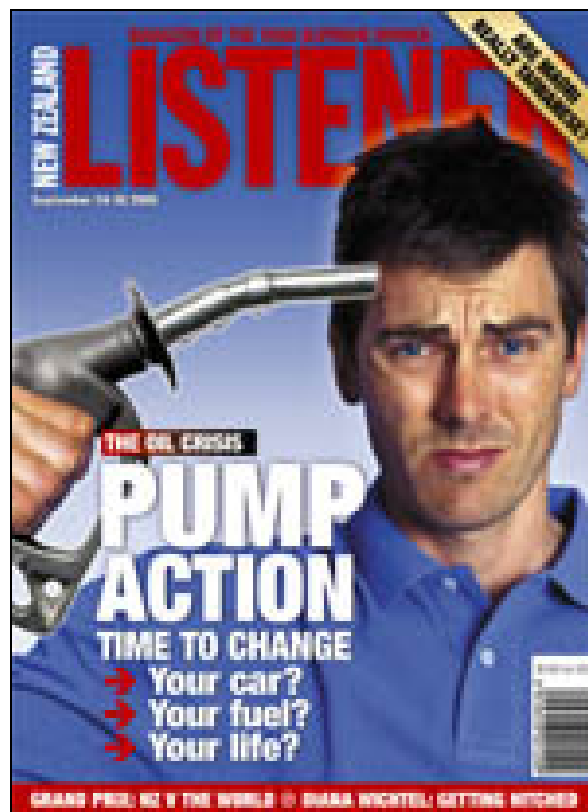
4.4.4. Media Coverage of the Peak Oil Threat

The question this thesis asks is, to what extent does the threat presented by global risks affect a sense of ontological security at the level of everyday life? It is significant to note here that although there has been very little academic research detailing the implications of peak oil for New Zealand tourism, the issue has been given broad coverage in the media. This shows that peak oil has already become entrenched in public discourse. The *New Zealand Listener*, for instance, has been one source of information that has continually provided updates on the global oil situation. One article within the publication in 2004, entitled 'Peak hour' (Janes, 2004), raised the prospect of peak oil, citing peak oil theorist and geologist Colin Campbell³³ explaining that dwindling oil supplies and escalating prices will lead to a global economic decline of a magnitude much larger than the oil shocks of the 1970s. The article also cites the New Zealand Green Party co-leader, Jeanette Fitzsimons, arguing that peak oil will inevitably result in air travel becoming much more expensive, meaning fewer tourists to New Zealand. In 2005, New Zealand economist Brian Easton wrote an article for the *New Zealand Listener* specifically addressing the question of what will happen once oil production peaks. In his article, Easton explains that, in the advent of peak oil, prices for oil will soar, causing escalating costs for

³³ Colin Campbell is a petroleum geologist and founder of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas (ASPO).

transport fuels and a drop in unnecessary travel (Easton, 2005). Another article in the publication later the same year entitled ‘Pump Action’ (see Figure 4.9) by Alistair Bone argued that, with fuel prices going up owing to international events, our oil dependent way of life may no longer be sustainable. In the article, Bone frequently refers to the impact of international events on the cost of domestic and international travel and cites Air New Zealand’s frequently increasing fuel levees for all forms of air travel as an example (Bone, 2005).

Figure 4.9 ‘Pump Action’



Source: *New Zealand Listener* (September 24-30, 2005).

While the subject of a world energy crisis was well publicised in 2004 and 2005, unprecedented increases in the price of petrol ensured that the topic became a central issue in 2006. An article in the 15 July 2006 edition of *The Press*, entitled ‘Petrol prices likely to rise’ (Eaton, 2006: 1), reported that the ongoing threat of war between Israel and Lebanon in the Middle East was creating huge pressures for New Zealand oil companies to raise the price of petrol, and that drivers should “brace” themselves for upcoming increases in travel costs. Three days later an article in the 18 July 2006 edition of *The Dominion Post*, headed ‘Middle East conflict pushes petrol price up’,

reported that geopolitical tensions were responsible for raising petrol costs in New Zealand up to \$1.76.9 and \$1.81.9 a litre for 91 and 95 octane respectively, up 38 cents from the year before (Ray, 2006: 3). Another article entitled 'Fuel price keeps cars off road' in the 2 September 2006 edition of *The New Zealand Herald* followed this up, explaining that rising fuel costs were seeing motorists filling their cars less and leaving their cars at home more frequently (Dearnaley, 2006). After fuel prices dropped towards the end of September 2006, *The New Zealand Herald* released another article on 28 September 2006, headed 'Fuel price down 'but not for long'', citing ANZ Bank chief economist Cameron Bagrie who warns that ongoing geopolitical tensions would inevitably see the price of petrol in New Zealand again increase (Eames, 2006). The point that can be made from these articles is that the New Zealand public has already been well educated on the risks posed by a global oil shortage, whether it be through peak oil or due to international political tension. Owing to the size of the risk, the issue is whether the consequences that an oil crisis could evoke for tourism in New Zealand are enough for those with a stake in Akaroa to take seriously.

4.5. Terrorism

4.5.1. Terrorism's Global Reach

A more familiar threat to tourism in recent times than that of climate change and peak oil has been terrorism. As mentioned in Chapter Two, terrorism strikes at the heart of the tourism industry because it directly affects people's willingness to travel. What makes terrorism particularly pernicious with respect to tourism is that its threat is dual in nature. On one hand, terrorism is a global phenomenon, with terrorist acts perpetrated by a network of organisations that span the globe, and may manifest anywhere and strike at any time. Giddens (2006) defines this as "new-style" terrorism, where terrorist organisations are now international organisations and reach across various countries. On the other hand, *one* terrorist event can have major repercussions worldwide, affecting tourism in countries that were not an initial target. Chapter Two, for instance, spoke briefly of 9/11 having repercussions for tourism in places as distant as Egypt. This shows the susceptibility of tourist-dependent areas to far off terrorist events. Herein lies terrorism's threat to Akaroa.

In considering the threat that terrorism poses to tourism in New Zealand, the point is not necessarily whether the country itself is at risk to a terrorist event but whether terrorism could lead tourists to view the *act* of travelling to New Zealand as inherently dangerous. As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the determinants of global tourism and travel is tourists' own perceptions of safety. As explained by Edmonds and Mak (2006: 6):

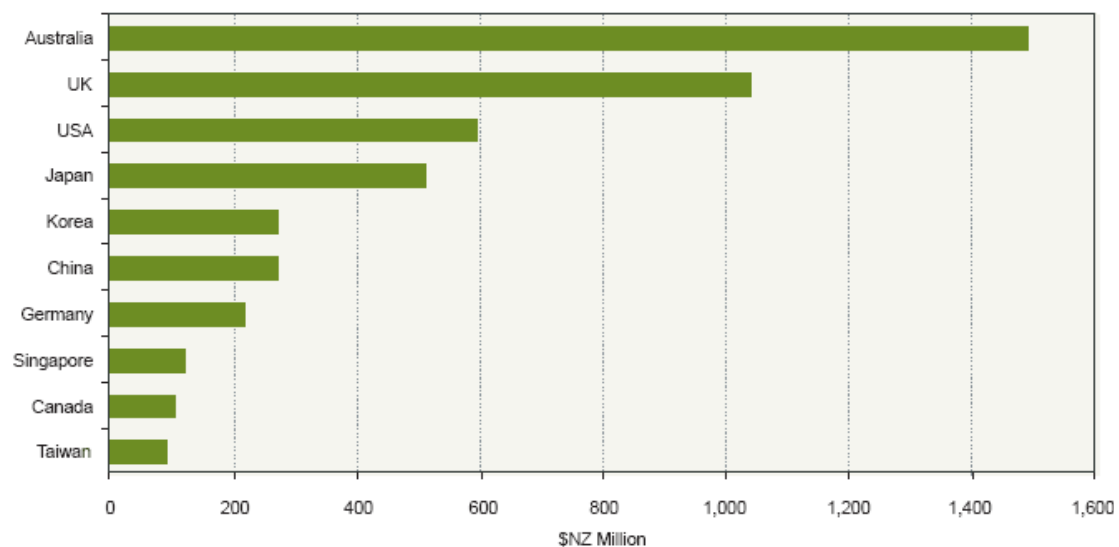
People travel for pleasure in order to escape from the day-to-day routine of their lives. What they do not want is to be exposed to personal hazards.... Not surprisingly, terrorist incidences and other threats to personal safety – whether they are natural disasters or disease epidemics – reduce people's propensity to travel.

Various examples serve to illustrate this point. Sonmez and Greafe (1998: 113) for instance explain that in the wake of the US-Libya conflict in 1986, two million American citizens altered their travel plans, which resulted in a 30 per cent decline in American tourists travelling to Europe the same year. This, Sonmez and Greafe explain, was not because Europe was seen as a threat to Americans, but because *travel itself* was perceived as too much of a risk to take. Egypt faced a similar situation in 1992, when a rise in terrorist activity elsewhere in the Middle East led to a 43 per cent decline in international tourist receipts (Coshall, 2003: 4). Such examples show that although a country may not itself be a terrorist target, its tourist industry can be affected nonetheless.

Although the threat terrorism poses to tourism in New Zealand is one that is hypothetical in nature, it is not altogether unrealistic. It may be argued that New Zealand's geographical and political distance from international terrorist activity makes the country exempt from the implications of the terrorist risk. However, this holds little weight when considering that, in many instances, people need to fly through zones that may be prone to terrorism to reach New Zealand. A recent example relates to the August 2006 terrorist plot to use liquid explosives on transatlantic flights between London and the US. As reported by the BBC ('Airlines terror plot' disrupted', 2006), in early August 2006, an attempt to smuggle liquid explosives on as many as 10 aircraft was foiled by Scotland Yard in a plan that was intended to involve a series of "waves" of simultaneous attacks, targeting three planes at each time. Such was the scale of the plot, the BBC reported, had it gone ahead it would have caused

“mass murder on an unimaginable scale”. *The New Zealand Herald* reported shortly after that had the plot not been foiled it would have been a spectre to rival even that of 9/11 (‘NZ tightens airline security after terror plot’, 2006). Given that Britain provides New Zealand’s second largest international tourist market in terms of economic contribution (see Figure 4.10), and that the US provides an intermediate point for travel between Britain and New Zealand,³⁴ any aversion to international air travel following the event may have had substantial flow-on effects for New Zealand tourism, including in Akaroa. This suggests that a direct susceptibility to terrorism is not a necessary condition for tourism in New Zealand and thus in Akaroa to be threatened.

Figure 4.10 Top Ten International Markets by Expenditure (2005)



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2006: 9).

An additional risk to Akaroa and its stakeholders relates to the threat of terrorist activity elsewhere in the South Pacific. While New Zealand is not considered a target for terrorism, the fact that Australia has been an active participant in the “war on terror” has left New Zealand’s trans-Tasman neighbours directly prone to the terrorist risk. This has been acknowledged in a white paper released in July 2004 by Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs, entitled *Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia* (Australian Government, 2004). In Chapter Six, the paper states that Australia has become a target for terrorism, and cites various statements made

³⁴ Evidence for this claim can be found by checking the websites of the various international airlines that fly between New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These can be found at http://www.newzealand.com/travel/getting-to-around-nz/getting-to-nz/airlines/airlines_home.cfm

publicly by the Al Qaeda terrorist organisation that confirm this status. The report also takes seriously the possibility of a terrorist attack on Australian soil, proclaiming that in light of the global nature of terrorism in the twenty-first century, Australia's geography is no defence (2004: 72). Given Australia's proximity to New Zealand and that many international travellers travel via Australia to New Zealand and vice versa, were a major terrorist event to occur on Australian territory, there is a chance that it would severely undermine tourism in the Australasian region. Alternatively, given that Australia provides New Zealand's largest international tourist market, if a terrorist strike targeted flights to or from Australia, the repercussions for international air travel in the region may cause international arrivals from Australia to New Zealand to plummet. This would devastate tourism in New Zealand, having flow-on effects for Akaroa. Since terrorist networks have a penchant for the unexpected and unforeseen, as shown by 9/11 and the Bali bombings, this scenario may not be so remote. The point here is that, while the risk of a direct terrorist strike to New Zealand is minimal, New Zealand's geographic isolation and reputation for safety does not guarantee that its tourist industry will remain unaffected in the future.

4.5.2. Terrorism and the Media

If awareness of the terrorist threat is contingent on the extent to which information about it is made public, then terrorism is likely to be etched deeply in public consciousness. Recognising the coverage that terrorist events like 9/11 receive, acquiring knowledge of terrorism and its effects is almost inescapable. As Wilkinson (1997: 53) explains:

[F]or as long as terrorists commit acts of violence the media will continue to scramble to cover them in order to satisfy the desire of their audiences for dramatic stories in which there is inevitably huge public curiosity about both victimisers and their victims.

While Wilkinson's statement is obviously true with respect to such attacks as 9/11 and the Bali bombings, this is also the case with the threat terrorism poses to New Zealand tourism. Following 9/11 in particular, New Zealand tourism's vulnerability to terrorism received extensive publicity. An early example comes from the *Waikato Times* on 2 March 2002 with an article headed 'Tourism Still Flying Into Terrorism Turbulence' explaining that various tourism-centred businesses such as Kelly

Tarlton's and the Waitomo Caves suffered heavy losses in the months following 9/11. The article continued by outlining the impact of 9/11 on airlines around the world, demonstrating the "catastrophic" impact of terrorism's global reach (Boddy, 2002: 26). Similar reports continued in 2003, with an article titled 'Tourism Most at Risk from Terrorism' in the 22 March 2003 edition of *The Press* which reported that any terrorist activity resulting from the war in Iraq could cause an immediate drop in international tourist numbers to New Zealand's shores (Gorman, 2003: 2). The threat was publicised again in the 20 May 2003 edition of *The Dominion Post*, with an article headed 'Big Job Losses in Tourism Expected' which suggested that the combined effects of terrorism and other international events could lead to the loss of 15 per cent of all New Zealand tourism jobs (Trow, 2003: 5). While many similar articles have been published, these examples indicate that the threat terrorism poses to tourism in New Zealand has been widely publicised. However, as with the other risks outlined in this chapter, the question is whether this bears upon stakeholders' thinking.

4.6. Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

4.6.1. The Pandemic Threat

As with the other risks presented in this chapter, the threat avian influenza poses to Akaroa is multifarious in nature as it has the potential to strike from a number of angles. This relates to the consequences posed to tourism in New Zealand if an outbreak of avian influenza occurs overseas and the repercussions that may result if avian influenza manifests in New Zealand itself. Each of these two scenarios present cases where international visitor numbers to Akaroa could decline, or where avian influenza could seriously undermine the functional capacity of businesses that rely on tourism. Given tourism's significance to Akaroa, both situations could severely jeopardise the town's socio-economic wellbeing.

The general fear of an influenza pandemic and its potential effect on tourism has been a topical subject since the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in Asia in 2003. In what started as a number of small, isolated outbreaks in Southern China in late 2002, SARS quickly became a global, albeit short lived, pandemic. Owing to an infected Chinese male travelling from China to Hong Kong in March

2003, the disease ended up infecting more than 8000 people and causing 774 deaths in 26 countries on five continents by June the same year (Wilder-Smith, 2006: 53). Because SARS spread through international travel and centred on popular Asian tourist destinations, many people thought twice about where they travelled, and many travel hubs, seen as epicentres of the disease, were avoided (Abraham, 2005: 12). The point that SARS illustrates is that international air travel can unwittingly facilitate a global disaster because it acts as an ideal vector for pathogenic spread. SARS also demonstrates tourist destinations' susceptibility to a pandemic induced visitor decline. Although SARS was short lived, avian influenza presents a similar, but potentially more devastating, threat to tourist destinations.

The threat that avian influenza currently poses to tourism worldwide relates to the spread of one of the disease's current sub-types, H5N1. Highly pathogenic amongst the avian species, H5N1 is a form of avian influenza that is able to cross the avian-human species barrier. Because of this, close contact between humans and contaminated birds can lead to human infection (Walsh, 2005: 14). Already, various international cases of H5N1 infection in humans have been recorded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2007a). Because humans have no natural immunity to the disease, H5N1 has the potential to devastate entire human populations. Although the WHO states that the disease's human toll cannot be known with certainty prior to the emergence of a pandemic (WHO, 2007b), some WHO experts have been quoted as saying that it could kill as many as 100 million people ('Bird flu worse-case scenario: '100m dead'', 2005). However, the threat rests on H5N1 mutating into a form that is transmissible between humans (WHO, 2007b). What is alarming about this scenario is that it is deemed by some as a virtual certainty. Director-General of the WHO, Lee Jong-wook, for instance, was quoted in 2005 as saying that an avian influenza pandemic "is just a matter of time" (cited in Jolly, 2005). Recognising this, the question is not a matter of if an avian influenza will occur, but when.

To further gauge the threat avian influenza poses to tourism, parallels can be made with another, earlier pandemic in 1918, commonly termed "the Spanish flu". Thought to be caused by another influenza sub-type caught from birds, the Spanish flu struck communities in various countries, killing approximately 50 million people worldwide

(Allen, 2006: 76). Such was the virulence of the pandemic that populations around the world were completely devastated. Various communities in Alaska, for instance, lost 50 per cent of their population (Greger, 2006a), while over 675,000 died in the United States (Allen, 2006: 76). There are two points of difference however between the Spanish flu and the risk posed by the H5N1 variant of avian influenza. First, while the 1918 pandemic killed an estimated 50 million, its mortality rate was only 5 per cent. The H5N1 strain of avian influenza, however, has a current mortality rate of 50 per cent, placing it on a par with the Ebola virus (Greger, 2006b). Second, the rapidity with which the 1918 pandemic was able to spread was restricted by the means of human transport at the time. Compared to today's standards, populations were largely immobile and travel between countries was limited. Today, millions participate in international travel each year, which is made less time consuming owing to developments in commercial aviation. Because of this, while the 1918 flu engulfed the world within weeks, the H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza could spread globally within days (Greger, 2006c).

4.6.2. Risks that Stem from an International Outbreak

The destructive potential of an avian influenza pandemic leads to one of the first points of concern for Akaroa: the consequences of an influenza outbreak overseas. As SARS showed in 2003, a pandemic outbreak can have a dire effect on tourists' motivations for travel. However, were an avian influenza pandemic to break out in countries that serve as New Zealand's key international markets, such as the UK, Japan or Australia, this would create a situation where tourists themselves may be too sick to travel. These are both possibilities that New Zealand's National Tourism Organisation, Tourism New Zealand, is taking seriously. Through its website, Tourism New Zealand specifies that were avian influenza to break out as a virus transmissible between humans, either in a tourists' country of origin or in travel hubs that serve as intermediate points for travel, the likelihood is that international tourist arrivals would wane considerably (Tourism New Zealand, 2007b).³⁵ The extent of this, of course, is difficult to gauge; however, if any of New Zealand's top markets were affected, the visitor decline would be severe. This would have substantial flow-on effects for all tourist-dependent communities in New Zealand.

³⁵ Tourism New Zealand is an international marketing agency responsible for marketing New Zealand as a tourist destination (Tourism New Zealand, 2007c).

While an outbreak of avian influenza overseas could lead to a general aversion to travel, an additional threat to Akaroa stems from the prospect of New Zealand closing its borders to all inbound traffic in order to prevent a pandemic from reaching its shores. The possibility of this was raised in an article in *The Press* on 23 September 2005 entitled 'Bird Flu May See NZ Close Borders' (Bleakley, 2005: 3). The article reported that New Zealand border agencies were examining the logistics of stopping all people and imports from entering the country as a means to quarantine itself and minimise the threat of an avian influenza pandemic affecting the New Zealand population. While the article was speculative over whether such drastic measures would be implemented, the New Zealand Customs Service currently confirms it as an option, with its website listing full or partial border closure as possibilities depending on the circumstances (New Zealand Customs Service, 2007). If such strategies were employed, the international visitor market in Akaroa and in all other tourist-dependent communities in New Zealand could, for a period, disappear.

4.6.3. Risks that Stem from an Outbreak in New Zealand

Although Akaroa is at risk from avian influenza manifesting overseas, it is equally at risk were a pandemic to occur in New Zealand itself. As SARS demonstrated, in the wake of a pandemic, travellers are likely to avoid destinations that are affected. If circumstances arose where a human-to-human variant of avian influenza became widespread in New Zealand, the likelihood is that New Zealand would become black marked as a tourist destination. This is another possibility taken seriously by Tourism New Zealand, who state that an outbreak of avian influenza would likely tarnish New Zealand's clean, green and safe image and deter tourists from visiting (Tourism New Zealand, 2007b). As has been established, tourists have a natural aversion to threat. Consequently, if New Zealand were no longer able to present an image of being safe and isolated from global dangers, there is a strong possibility that tourist numbers would substantially drop. This could have severe flow-on effects on Akaroa as a tourist-dependent community.

While international tourists might be put off travelling to New Zealand in the wake of a pandemic manifesting within the country itself, a second possible scenario is that of those in the industry becoming infected themselves, disabling the functioning capacity

of businesses that capitalise on tourism. While it is not possible to predict with accuracy how many would get sick or die were a pandemic to occur, based upon the Spanish flu's impact on New Zealand in 1918, figures presented by the Ministry of Health indicate that up to 1.6 million people could become ill over an 8 week period, including approximately 33,000 deaths (Ministry of Health, 2007). In *Black November: The 1918 influenza pandemic in New Zealand*, historian Geoffrey Rice (2005: 17) explains that the impact of the Spanish flu in New Zealand was so severe that it became (and remains) New Zealand's worst ever natural disaster, both in terms of rates of mortality and disruption to daily life. If the current pandemic threat should have a similar or worse effect, this may render people unable to work due to poor health, or unwilling to work in order to avoid the disease. As in 1918, this could cause severe interruptions to daily life and affect the functioning capacity of all forms of industry in New Zealand, not least tourism.

4.6.4. The Media and Public Awareness of the Pandemic Threat

As Beck's and Giddens' work contends, the media play a fundamental role in the communication of risks to the public. Indeed, they note that the media are a vital component in the creation of a risk conscious society. This analysis of the media relates directly to the current pandemic threat as avian influenza has received widespread attention. This applies to all forms of media: television news, news websites, newspapers and current affairs magazines and programming. As a general indication of avian influenza's popularity as an interest story, search results from entering "bird flu" into the New Zealand Herald's website³⁶ search option turned up 250 articles in a period from 16 January 2006 to 29 March 2007. Because of the extensive coverage avian influenza has received, few people could claim to be unaware of its threat. In addition, the Ministry of Health has run its own public awareness campaign, distributing brochures on the pandemic threat in a nationwide letterbox drop to over 1.4 million households in March 2006, with information on how to prepare if a pandemic strikes (Kiong and Johnston, 2006). Such dissemination suggests that people would generally be aware of the risk involved.

While public information on avian influenza has generally focused on its general threat to human life, media reports have been very specific about the threat it poses to

³⁶ www.nzherald.co.nz

New Zealand tourism. Various examples illustrate this. An article in the 11 November 2005 edition of *The Otago Daily Times*, for instance, entitled ‘Tourism bird flu plans urged’, reports that tourism operators should consider developing contingency plans in the event of a border closure to avoid a pandemic threat (Oldham, 2005). Similar warnings came from Black in her article ‘Fear of flu’ which was presented as the main feature in the October 8-14 2005 edition of the *New Zealand Listener*. Here, Black points out that should a pandemic occur, New Zealand is not only likely to isolate itself from the outside world but may also ban travel to areas within New Zealand (Black, 2005). Further alarm was raised in *The Press* on 15 October 2005, with an article headed ‘Facing the flu’ (2005: 2) citing Bank of New Zealand chief economist Tony Alexander as saying that, in light of avian influenza, New Zealand’s tourist industry would be “decimated” and many small businesses would probably close for good. Such articles indicate that information about the threat avian influenza poses to New Zealand tourism has already become publicly available. The question now, as with the other global risks covered in this chapter, is whether it elicits any particular concern in Akaroa.

4.7. Conclusion

The question posed at the beginning of this thesis asked, to what degree does the threat presented by global risks affect a sense of ontological security at the level of everyday life? While a number of localised risks in relation to Akaroa were identified in Chapter Three, Chapter Four has presented a number of global and significantly more consequential risks that could befall Akaroa in the future. As explained in section two of this chapter, although Akaroa is an autonomous locality in its own right, viewed from a distance, the town is dependent on and fundamentally connected to a globalised environment with its own set of risks. This relates to Akaroa’s position as a tourist-dependent economy, where various global strands in the form of international tourists and global cash flows meet. However, this makes Akaroa subject to a number of risks that also transcend spatial division, with climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza all having the power to undermine the township’s dependence on the international tourist market. This paints a different understanding of Akaroa, not just as a geographically situated unit of social and economic commerce, but one that acknowledges that its security depends significantly on external forces.

In the context of the risk debate, while Chapter Four has presented Akaroa as surrounded by a number of global-level risks, it has also shown that knowledge of such risks circulates extensively in the media. In step with the risk society literature, the chapter has thus shown the “reflexivity” of late modernity and its “reflectivity”, whereby society becomes conscious of itself *as* a risk society. This depends less on actual experience of global risks than on how risk information is conveyed to the public. Given that media coverage of risks like climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza has been extensive, a macro-sociological or top-down approach to risk would assume that Akaroa’s inhabitants would exhibit considerable anxiety over the prospect of such risks becoming manifest.

Collectively, Chapters Three and Four have provided the base from which an empirical approach to the risk literature can now be conducted. Up to this point, Akaroa has been presented as a place prone to internalised conflicts, tensions and power struggles, as well as a place susceptible to more devastating, globally emerging threats. Akaroa has thus been portrayed as an ideal testing ground from which to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the differing perspectives in the risk literature. The task now, and the central focus for Chapter Five, is to examine what forms of risk, the global or the local, cause the greatest concern in Akaroa.

5. Research Findings

5.1. Introduction

The thesis has now outlined the fundamentals of the risk debate and has shown that the debate is relevant to the township of Akaroa. Setting the scene, Chapter Two began by offering a review of the risk literature in order to expose the differences that exist between the risk society and socio-cultural perspectives of risk. Following this, Chapter Three began applying the debate to Akaroa, showing it both as a place where its dependence on tourism leaves it susceptible to distant events and as an area that experiences numerous local-level problems. Finally, Chapter Four presented a number of global-level risks that may affect Akaroa in the future. In the context of the risk debate, Akaroa has thus been presented as both a spatially situated unit of social and economic interaction and as a node within a human-made global risk environment. Accordingly, Akaroa has been presented as a place where both local and global issues are relevant to people's lives, and as an ideal case study in which to ground the risk debate at the level of empirical observation.

While the preceding chapters of the thesis have served to outline the risk debate and how it applies to Akaroa, in this chapter the debate is taken beyond the realm of theory by offering an empirically-based examination of what Akaroa's community members fear the most. In accomplishing this task, interviewees' responses to the question of what risks they feel are most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general are presented in order to establish whether local or global issues most influence their thinking. Following this, and in order to substantiate the findings of the interview process, a content analysis of letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail* is included to give evidence of the types of issues that hold sway in public discourse at the community level. The overall objective of this chapter is to present community members' own reflections on risk.

5.2. Risks of Concern to the Business Community

Beginning the interview phase of this research, I started by concentrating on issues of most concern to people belonging to Akaroa's business community. As this group has a significant stake in Akaroa's success as a tourist destination, it is reasonable to

assume that its members would be especially conscious of the threats that global risks pose. However, despite the extensive media coverage given to such risks as climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza, the issues most commonly identified by representatives of this group related to problems that arise within the confines of community life. From the outset, this implied that the attention of business owners and operators in the township is directed towards the local sphere, and that global risks are bracketed from their day-to-day concerns.

5.2.1. Opposition from Lifestyle Groups

Meeting with members of Akaroa's business community, I started each interview by asking participants what risks they felt were most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general. Of the many issues eventually discussed, one of the most commonly identified was the turmoil created by "lifestylers" who frequently oppose plans for commercial development. The first to raise this issue while talking about risk was a business owner involved in advertising named "Marcel":

You have a group of people who have come to Akaroa because it's quiet, it's peaceful, and that peace and quiet is what they want, it's why they came here. Other people came here because of the opportunities. And so the two are sometimes opposing each other. One group doesn't want to see any more development or change, the other promotes development.

Talking to Marcel, problems caused by lifestylers was clearly a heated issue. When asked why the anti-development sentiments of lifestylers was a concern, Marcel explained that the active opposition of lifestyle groups towards altering Akaroa's built heritage was making efforts to further expand the township's economic base extremely difficult. This, he further explained, was undermining business owners' ability to further capitalise on the tourist market and to make a living themselves. Another business owner, a jeweller named "Robert", raised a similar point during our discussion about risk in relation to the legislative requirements of the RMA. Voicing his opinion about the risks of most concern to Akaroa, the provisions of the RMA was of particular concern because it allowed a few "interfering individuals" to continually sidetrack new plans to bring further economic growth. He explained:

You get a few people here who are just lifestylers with their own vested interests, and with the way the laws are they can petition or lay complaints at no cost to them and suddenly hold things up to such a degree that people get sick of it.

Like Marcel, Robert felt that the ongoing opposition from those with lifestyle interests was disrupting business people's attempts to further develop Akaroa as a destination. Evident here was a strong dislike of those in the township with opposing ideological views. However, their responses were also reflective of other participants who at times during the interview process briefly mentioned vocal opposition from lifestyle groups to commercial development as being a serious threat to Akaroa's future economic wellbeing. Focusing on opposition from lifestyle groups as a major risk suggests that, despite the media publicity given to global risks, the attention of many business community members is more focused towards local problems. This became clearer as other issues arose.

5.2.2. The Decline of Akaroa's Working Population

One of the issues facing Akaroa that was identified in Chapter Three was that, owing to the high cost of living, the township's population is beginning to decline. Speaking of this issue, a concern identified by some representatives of Akaroa's business community during discussions about risk was that businesses were suffering from a declining employment base. This was first raised by an Akaroa District Promotions board member named "Tom":

Prices in Akaroa are getting much higher. There are overseas owners purchasing property and leaving them empty. As they've already got enough money, they don't have to worry about leasing their property out, or if they do it's just too expensive for most people. Because of this, it's just not possible to find a place to live. On top of that, families here are struggling and are moving with their kids to Christchurch, which means the town is losing locals.

The issue identified by Tom was that, because there are few rental options in the town, and because what is available is unaffordable to most low income people, workers can neither afford to continue living in Akaroa, nor, if they wish to move to the township to take up employment opportunities, find an affordable place to stay. This was a concern identified by others. An accommodation provider involved in the motel industry named "Barbara", for instance, explained:

It is becoming worse and worse. I had an ad in the paper this week and I have had no replies. The guy across the road there at the motel, he put an ad in and he has had no replies. I've got my two staff who work for me now but probably through the summer you have to rely on wwoofers.³⁷ And that becomes more and more difficult.

The concern here was that, because land-values in Akaroa had reached a premium, those on a low income were either being pushed out of Akaroa or were being excluded from joining the township. This, both Tom and Barbara explained, was creating an imbalance in the township where service workers, a vital component of Akaroa's economy, were being replaced by wealthy, part-time residents who contribute little. This shows that while Akaroa is susceptible to a variety of global threats, business owners already have more immediate issues vying for attention.

5.2.3. Meeting Expectations and Securing a Market Share

As has been outlined by Urry (2002) and Thorns (1997), a mark of tourism in the current age is that it is an extremely competitive industry. Because of the competition that exists between destinations for a share of the tourist market, various niches must be carved, gimmicks used and images created to entice potential visitors. This is evident in the way Akaroa promotes itself as a former French settlement. However, a major concern identified by three participants was that Akaroa would fail in this competitive environment and thus lose out to other destinations. The first to touch on this issue was "Lynda", a tourism information manager who voiced concern about the increasing competition amongst tourist destinations to market themselves online:

[T]he international traveller has become very technology focused and they are doing everything on the internet. So, technology and the hand-held phones that are connected to the internet – they can scan the world with these. So that's a risk for us there. People are booking their holidays online, so we have to make sure we get in there and be visible online.

Lynda explained that many visitors already have an itinerary of things to do before they reach the town as they have done all their research on the internet. However, she added that this was also becoming the case for international visitors even before they

³⁷ "Wwoofers", or "Willing workers on organic farms", is a term given to travellers who work for accommodation. The term is no longer specific to travellers who work on organic farms.

reach New Zealand. Because of this, she explained, it is no longer enough for Akaroa to have a reputation as a nice place to visit or to have brochures on Akaroa available in visitor centres throughout New Zealand; Akaroa has to promote itself aggressively online in order to capture a market share. By failing to do so, Lynda explained, many businesses in Akaroa would go bust.

While Lynda identified not being able to keep up in the competitive marketing environment as a major risk to Akaroa's tourist-dependent economy, she added that a further problem was that the township was not meeting visitors' expectations. Explaining that many people visit Akaroa based on its reputation, Lynda pointed out that the township was beginning to be portrayed negatively owing to an often-hostile reception visitors received from the township's residents. Of most concern, Lynda explained, was the negative impression given to the campervan market:

Another one that is a concern is the high campervan market. And we are talking a huge number of campervans, domestically right throughout New Zealand. They come into Akaroa and they are not feeling particularly welcome. We have parking issues. The local people are rejecting them somewhat because they are parking in front of their houses. They don't have a common place to park these campervans. And they are going away without a good impression. They are not feeling welcome. So these are the things that we have to watch because they are the most important aspect of tourism. And like it or not, it's a key market.

Lynda noted that, because many visitors come to the township on the back of word of mouth advertising, to send them away with a bad impression could easily lead to a significant slump in the overall visitor market. A similar concern was held by others. Robert, for instance, pointed out issues relating to parking:

The biggest problem is parking. It's totally counter-productive. What do people come here for? Relaxation. They've put a two hour parking limit on the main street here, what can you do in two hours? You can't go out on the boat, you come back into town, you've got a parking ticket. Businesses work their butts off to get people here. People walk back to their car and the council has paid this fellow to put a bloody ticket on their car. I mean, tickets on cars don't make people feel like they're on holiday. It's only going to disgruntle people, what are you going to gain?

The issue at stake for these interviewees was that, by failing to make a good impression, whether through online marketing or in people's first-hand experience of Akaroa, tourists may either never visit Akaroa or, if they do visit, be dissuaded from returning. As with the earlier responses, this suggests that Akaroa already faces a number of challenges to its success as a tourist destination. By focusing on such comparatively low-scale problems, global risks clearly fail to register as priority issues.

5.2.4. Risks Involving the Hector's Dolphins

While global risks have a much greater destructive potential than those that emerge locally, not all local-level risks in Akaroa should be considered as minor. While the decline of Akaroa's working population is one example, another relates to Akaroa's economic dependence on the Hector's dolphins. Clearly, Akaroa's pull as a tourist destination would not be anything like it is today without the Hector's dolphins as a tourist attraction. Such is the significance of the Hector's dolphins to Akaroa's tourism industry³⁸ and general economy that were marine tours and "swimming with the dolphins" no longer an option, the implications for Akaroa would be profound. This was a risk identified by "Alex", whose interests as an eco-tourism operator are tied to the Hector's dolphins attraction:

Quite clearly, the single biggest attraction in Akaroa is the Hector's dolphins. If the Hector's dolphins decided to leave the district, we wouldn't have anything like the appeal for harbour cruising like we have now. Between ourselves and our opposition companies, we are probably taking out about close to 130 – 140,000 people per year on the harbour, and the primary goal is to find dolphins to swim with.

Continuing along this line, Alex explained that a more specific concern for him related to the threat pollution posed to the dolphins' marine environment. Alex pointed out that this primarily related to commercial and residential development in Akaroa, with the growing number of people visiting the township overwhelming the sewerage system, occasionally resulting in raw, untreated sewage being discharged into the harbour. He explained:

³⁸ The "Black Cat Group", for example, which is one of the main companies in Akaroa taking visitors to see the dolphins attraction, is considered one of the largest cruise companies in the South Island and attracts over 100,000 customers per year (Blackcat Cruises, 2007).

Akaroa has a population of 550 to 600 permanently, but when all the houses are full that population goes up to about 3000 and on top of that you have all the motels, bed and breakfasts and backpackers. So when everything's humming at high season, the sewerage system can't cope. And that relates also to the problem earlier about Hector's dolphins. If we have raw sewage, sewage that has not been treated well enough, going into the harbour, that puts a big influence on the Hector's dolphins. It wasn't so bad last season but the season before that was a shocker. So you could be out five or six hundred metres past the sewage outlet with boatloads and you can smell it. That's not good for the tourists.

Equally pressing for Alex was the threat of the Department of Conservation (DOC)³⁹ revoking marine-based tourism operators' permits if they felt that tourist activity on Akaroa Harbour was placing strain on the marine environment. He continued:

We can't do what we do without a permit and our permit comes up for review every seven years. We are going through that review period now. So, they could determine that there is too much pressure on wildlife in the area and just take our permit away from us. Our permit could be killed overnight by decisions by the Department of Conservation. They are a law unto themselves. Almost like a dictatorship. All they are interested in is conservation. Business and whole communities that depend upon wildlife for their tourism businesses are at the beck and call of the Department of Conservation.

Evidently, marine-based tourism enterprises in Akaroa such as Alex's face multiple threats. Moreover, because Akaroa relies so heavily on the Hector's dolphins as a tourist attraction, the township as a whole would suffer tremendously if marine tours or "swimming with the dolphins" were no longer an option. This could lead to widespread unemployment in many sectors of the township's economy. Consequently, while such global risks as climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza all pose catastrophic threats, the loss of the Hector's dolphins as a commercial attraction was clearly for Alex a more pressing issue.

5.2.5. Global Risks

Despite a willingness to talk about risk, interviewees representing Akaroa's business community seldom made reference to risks that loom in the global sphere. Based upon

³⁹ The Department of Conservation is a Government organisation that administers most of the Crown land in New Zealand protected for scenic, scientific, historic or cultural reasons, or set aside for recreation. This includes national forest and maritime parks, marine reserves, rivers, some of New Zealand's coastline and various offshore islands (Department of Conservation, 2007).

the risks identified by business community members above, it is arguable that the presence of more immediate concerns simply takes precedence; eclipsing any fear about global scenarios. When the idea of global risks came up during conversation with one interviewee involved in tourism marketing, “Stephen”, this was readily apparent:

Dinosaurs got wiped out by a bloody thing and you’ve got asteroids coming towards us in 2029 and, Jesus, I think we just need to get on with life and certainly from my point of view, I am an intelligent person, I know these kind of things, but we need to get people to Akaroa by April, now how are we going to do that?

While Stephen acknowledged the existence of global risks, he felt that more immediate concerns demanded greater attention. For this reason, Stephen explained that it was impractical for him to worry about abstract possibilities when other, everyday issues continued to plague him. Stephen also explained that he ignored such issues because he felt that planning for global catastrophes was a responsibility held by others. He continued:

Global warming is an issue as is bird flu, but who has responsibility? It’s the Government. Banks Peninsula has many attractions which are unique, we just need to concentrate on the reasons why people should go there. We are more worried about key markets and attracting potential visitors. At the local-level, global events are not really on the radar. The United Nations and the World Tourism Organisation would be talking about it because that’s what they do.

Alongside noting that it was impractical to worry about global-level threats, Stephen explained that it was not his position to worry about such issues because he felt that this task lies with higher institutional bodies. In contrast to Beck’s and Giddens’ shared view that the modern age is marked not only by the emergence of global-level risks, but also by a declining faith amongst lay individuals in the ability of risk experts, Stephen’s “faith” in those who govern tourism was particularly clear.

While Stephen was the only participant to go into detail as to why global risks failed to bother him, others also touched on the subject. During the interview with Tom, I introduced the notion of high-consequence risks to see if this would elicit any

reaction. In response, Tom mentioned the threat of terrorism, but was quick to pass it off as a concern:

Terror threats overseas is an issue but not something of immediate concern here. I see it as a low probability risk. Tourism is forecast to grow in New Zealand and in Canterbury for the next five years, so this is not an issue. There are no contingencies to deal with such issues – not at a local-level at least.

Noteworthy in Tom's response was his reference to tourism forecasts. Despite the global climate of uncertainty in which Akaroa is enveloped, this reflects confidence in the institutional bodies that forecast tourism growth. Given that Tom's job involves attracting visitors to Akaroa through place promotion, it is likely that he would be more sensitive to global risks than most. However, by referring to tourism forecasts, Tom's response suggests that global risks are not identified as priority issues.

Although the general sentiment amongst interviewees representing Akaroa's business community was one that had little regard for global issues, one participant bucked this trend. When "Chris", an Akaroa District Promotions board member and owner/manager of a bed and breakfast, was interviewed about risks to his business and to Akaroa in general, he referred to the fears he had about terrorism and the US-Iraq war when his business first started. He explained:

Because of the security of the market in New Zealand, the only situation I thought of was a World War Three situation that could stop tourists coming to New Zealand. That was the only risk I thought of. Twelve months later was September 11, less than twelve months later, and I thought: "Oh my God, the one thing that we never thought would happen, has happened!" I honestly thought that that's the end of tourism. And then the next thing we've got the Iraq war situation coming in. I was looking at that thinking: "Well, once again international tourists are going to travel through the United States to get here. They might not come here because they have to travel through the United States in a vulnerable period". These are the things I think are really important to us.

When asked about what issue currently concerned him the most, he replied:

Well, at the moment right now, the way the world situation is, probably bird flu would be number one, and number two would be the sustainability of tourism in the face of the infrastructural and environmental issues we are facing.

Here, Chris showed a heightened awareness of risks within the global environment and a genuine concern for how they could affect Akaroa. However, following his statement, Chris explained that he had a career in the military spanning twenty-two years, which, by his own admission, meant that he had a greater tendency to think about global events than most. This suggests that his concern about terrorism and bird flu stems more from his military experience than from how global risks are publicised by the media. Accordingly, rather than being a model example of ontological insecurity in late modernity, Chris's selection of terrorism and bird flu as risks that concern him most appears to be influenced by his social background. Thus, while Chris exhibited concern about global risks, it appeared that this owed less to the influence of the media than his unique disposition to think about them.

5.3. Risks of Concern to the Wider Community

While it is reasonable to assume that members of Akaroa's business community would be particularly conscious of global risks because of their sensitivity to a visitor decline, others in the community were also interviewed in order to obtain a wider representation of people's views. This was necessary in order to see whether the alarm generated by the media about global threats to tourism had percolated through the community at large. However, as with the majority of interviewees from Akaroa's business sector, the issues raised by those representing the wider community were also embedded within the local sphere. This further suggests that, despite the global risk environment in which they are surrounded, community members generally focus on issues perceived as more immediately pressing.

5.3.1. Heritage Concerns

Like the meetings held with representatives of the business sector, I began each interview with participants representing the wider community by asking what risks they felt were most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general. Of the various issues identified, the one that drew the most animated response was the threat commercial development presents to Akaroa's built heritage and village-like

charm. As established in Chapter Three, many within the township are extremely defensive of Akaroa's historical buildings because they see such features as both key to Akaroa's unique character and as fundamental to their reasons for choosing the area as a place to reside. Unsurprisingly, when interviewing people from the wider community about risk, commercial development was identified by some as a primary issue. The potential loss of Akaroa's built heritage and village charm was first raised by a member of the Akaroa-Wairewa community board named "Craig". When asked about what he perceived to be the greatest risk to Akaroa, he replied:

I mean why do people go to Akaroa? They go because there is a magnificent collection of late 19th century buildings. If the late 19th century buildings weren't there, Akaroa would not have the same pull.

As Craig's role on the community board meant that he was aware of concerns held in the community at large, he explained that the preservation of Akaroa's built heritage was not only a primary issue for him but also for people throughout the community. Such apprehension, he explained, was because many within the community felt that commercial development was undermining what was of primary importance to Akaroa, its character and unique sense of place. This, he continued, was a leading issue in many of the community board's discussions.

While Craig explained that his concern about Akaroa's built heritage represented the concerns of the community at large, other interviewees raised the commercialisation issue independently. One such interviewee was "Juliette", a community-services worker, who voiced particular concern at the thought of commercial development undermining Akaroa's status as an historic town when risk was at the centre of our conversation. She explained:

Development is undermining the image of Akaroa. I mean, it is needed but it is *severely* undermining Akaroa's image as an historic town, the very reasons why people come to visit or to live.

For Juliette, the issue was that Akaroa's built heritage was what made the town unique and was the primary reason why people come to visit or to settle as residents. Thus, she felt that the town's historical characteristics were fundamental to its ongoing

prosperity. By undermining this, she explained that commercial development was destroying all that was special about the area. “Cliff”, a board member of the Akaroa Civic Trust, expressed similar concerns when the topic of risk was raised during our conversation:

Akaroa was so unspoilt when I came here. It is *why* I came here and why many people come here. I feel passionate about the development issue in Akaroa because if Akaroa loses its ambience it loses everything and we lose all we have.

Like Juliette, the main issue for Cliff was that commercial development undermines the reasons why many choose Akaroa as a place to either visit or reside. By continuing to do so, Cliff argued that commercial development would eventually leave Akaroa “soulless”.

While the modernisation of Akaroa’s built environment through commercial development was a general issue concerning many, other interviewees raised more specific concerns. While interviewing an historian named “Sophie” about risks of most concern to her, she voiced a deep concern for the Christchurch City Council’s plan to widen the Rue Lavaud and Rue Balguerie intersection in order to handle more traffic. This, she explained, was an affront to one of Akaroa’s most historic areas:

From my point of view, the heritage point of view, this is an unacceptable challenge to heritage. It is modernising an intersection which is really old. The post office building is 1914. The Criterion is 1862. The cottage is about 1842 or 43 and the BNZ is 1905. So there have been no substantial changes to that intersection for 100 years. The problem is buses and shuttles to the information centre. You could move these further out of town where it is not so much of an issue. This is diminishing heritage values.

As with the other three interviewees, Sophie’s response provides another example in which perceptions of risk are orientated around local issues. This again suggests that, despite the influence of the media in disseminating information about global risks, community members tend to bracket out global issues while focusing on those perceived to be more directly relevant to their everyday lives.

5.3.2. The Cost of Living

While a number of interviewees representing Akaroa's general community were quick to identify the loss of Akaroa's built heritage as a problem, as interviews progressed, some added that an additional concern was the ever-increasing cost of living. This came to light when a number of interview participants spoke of how the popular trend of owning a holiday home in the township has affected property values and thus the ability of low-income families to continue living in the area. For those who raised this issue, there was a strong feeling that this was slowly transforming Akaroa from a place identified as "home" to a place where the ontological foundations of the community were beginning to erode. The first to articulate this was Cliff from the Akaroa Civic Trust:

The problem is that we no longer have the population to be able to sustain businesses here and thus nothing for workers and no incentives for people to actually come and live here. The falling population is impacting on the school, the hospital. Even the fire brigade needs young volunteers. We aren't getting too many of those any more.

Cliff explained that one of the most pervasive concerns in Akaroa was that the cost of living was slowly "ripping the heart out of the town" and turning it from a place with a strong sense of community to a place that merely serves as a playground for an elite few. Others also raised this as an issue, with a particular concern for the affect of Akaroa's declining population on the local school. Sophie, for instance, complained:

A sense of community gives soul, but is at risk from all the development we are seeing. The school here is essential to maintain a sense of continuity but with the school in decline, we are beginning to lose this.

Craig held a similar concern:

This is a part of the same demographic change that I have mentioned earlier. In 1990, about the time when "tomorrow's schools" came in, I became the first chairman of Akaroa area school's board of trustees, and at that time the school's role was at 174 and now its about 103. That's a huge drop.

The common feeling amongst these interviewees was that the rising cost of living in Akaroa was eroding what they perceived as being of utmost importance to the township, its sense of community. This reflects a fear amongst community members that, owing to a boom in the property market, Akaroa is becoming an exclusive resort for wealthy part-time residents. As population statistics presented in Chapter Three show, this has been a trend which has affected Akaroa since 1996, which suggests that it is indeed an ongoing issue for community members. As opposed to global risks which loom as distant possibilities, this is a tangible issue that is already affecting community members' lives. By identifying these as priority concerns, global risks are clearly deemed as peripheral issues.

5.3.3. Risks to Maori

Although those whose interests are primarily economic and lifestyle orientated comprise the most dominant groups in Akaroa, another group who deserve mention, and whose interests are perhaps often overlooked, is Maori. However, establishing the types of issues of most concern to Maori in Akaroa proved a difficult exercise because Maori are under-represented in local debates. This is a difficulty other researchers have had in Akaroa also, with Fountain (2002: 392) labelling Maori as one of Akaroa's "missing voices". Initially, this made it difficult to find someone who represents Akaroa's Maori population to articulate any specific concerns. However, during the course of the interview process, I was fortunate to be given the name of a representative of the Onuku runanga,⁴⁰ "Alan", whose role as the Onuku runanga's manager involves contributing to the resource consent process for new commercial and residential developments in areas around Akaroa Harbour. Being involved in the resource consent process meant that Alan was informed on all issues relating to the preservation of Akaroa's natural and built environments, the importance of tourism to Akaroa and concerns specific to the local Maori population.

When the opportunity finally arose to interview Alan about the risks of most concern to Maori in the Akaroa Harbour area, very few issues were raised. In an attempt to prompt discussion, I asked Alan if Maori identified any threats to their future wellbeing in Akaroa and whether this might involve tourism. He replied:

⁴⁰ The Onuku runanga is one of 18 local councils that represent Ngai Tahu in the South Island. The Onuku Marae is centred five kilometres from the Akaroa township (Ngai Tahu, 2007).

We think it (tourism) will be key to our survival really. Especially as far as Onuku Marae goes, a lot of tourists staying on the Marae. If we can get tourists to come and use the Marae and sell them a unique experience as well as becoming involved ourselves in the whole eco-tourism system then that would be good. The North Island is going for the Marae experience. Here we could offer that, but with nature, with the dolphins and everything. So we do believe that tourism is the key, not only to our survival but to Akaroa as a whole.

Here, Alan expressed an awareness of tourism's importance to both Maori and to Akaroa in general but made no mention of global-level threats causing tourism to go into decline. When pressed further on what risks he thought were most relevant at present, he explained that this was primarily the Onuku runanga's inability to capitalise on tourism itself:

At the moment it is probably our lack of ability to get in there. Now we are in a position where we can go into those areas but there are no vacancies at the moment, everything seems to be running at a maximum. With the resource consents issues with the dolphin swimming and stuff like that, that's at a maximum, so it's pretty hard to get into it. There is no room in the market. Not at the moment.

Alan's responses suggest two things. First, while he demonstrated recognition of tourism's importance to the livelihoods of both Maori and the general population, he displayed no concern over such risks as climate change, peak oil, terrorism or avian influenza, all of which have the potential to devastate the township's economy and send the lives of its inhabitants into disarray. This suggests that such risks were outside his list of concerns. Second, as demonstrated with his reference to the runanga's inability to become more formally involved in tourism, the greatest problem this participant could identify was one that was decidedly local. Whether this could be formally categorised as a "risk" is doubtful; however, Alan's response, like many of the responses given by interviewees in this study, shows a level of thought that is firmly focused on local affairs.

5.4. Discussion

A number of points can be drawn from the interview process. To begin, while only thirteen participants were able to be recruited for this study, a noticeable feature was the extent to which their perceptions of risk varied. This was clear with the

identification of issues as diverse as failing to make a good impression on visitors and the widening of the Rue Lavaud and Rue Balguerie intersection. Such wide-ranging responses suggest that the perception of risk is *selective* and lies not with the “risk” itself, but with the interests and inclinations of the perceiver. Significantly, this was evident in the responses given by Chris, who was the sole interviewee to identify global risks as threats, as, owing to his military background, he seemed to be uniquely inclined to focus on global issues. Apart from Chris, an otherwise common feature of the issues identified by interviewees was that they were local in orientation. This suggests that, when it comes to matters of risk, community members are inclined to focus on issues of personal concern within the context of community life. Significant for the purposes of this thesis, this points to both the localised and subjective nature of risk perception at the street-level and a general indifference to global-level threats. This becomes further apparent when examining the types of issues prevalent within public discourse.

5.5. The Akaroa Mail

Up to this point, the thesis has shown that Akaroa is subject to both local and global-level problems, and has begun to gauge how these are prioritised by community members in everyday life. In this section, a content analysis is conducted of letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail* between January 2002 and May 2007 in order to explore the types of issues that hold sway in public discourse at the community level.⁴¹ As the *Akaroa Mail* is the only local paper and medium for the expression of public concerns, it is taken as a prime indicator of the kinds of issues that gain attention in the area. Because only thirteen interview participants were able to be recruited for this study, an analysis of the *Akaroa Mail*’s letters to the editor section provides a means to substantiate the findings drawn from the interview process. Importantly, while many letters published in the *Akaroa Mail* during this period reflected community members’ many frustrations and fears, an equal number merely announced community events and were thus redundant for the purposes of this study. Consequently, it was necessary to bypass a number of letters in the paper for others of greater relevance. Additionally, as a synopsis of every letter reflecting community

⁴¹ As mentioned in Chapter Two, January 2002 was selected as the starting date for this research because it was the approximate date for when media reports into the threats posed by global risks to New Zealand tourism began to regularly appear. May 2007 was chosen as a cut-off date because of time restrictions.

members' concerns during this period would require an amount of time beyond that available, the letters which are presented are samples taken from each year that exemplify the types of concerns most commonly expressed.

5.5.1. Akaroa Mail 2002

Beginning the content analysis of letters in the *Akaroa Mail* with those published in 2002, the aim was to gauge whether global or local issues most dominated public discussions. Despite the terrorist attacks of 9/11 occurring only a few months before and the publicity the event attracted for the damage it caused the tourism and travel industries, the most discernable feature of letters published in the paper during this year was the extent to which they focused on local issues. From the outset, this suggested that global issues at the centre of mainstream political and media debate remain separate from community members' everyday concerns. Indeed, rather than voicing apprehension about global risks, the issues that drew most concern during 2002 merely reflected the tension that exists in the community between groups with competing interests. Instead of being perturbed at the thought of future possible scenarios involving global events, this supports the view that a sense of risk or threat in Akaroa is primarily constructed amid a web of localised tensions. The construction of new, architecturally-designed holiday homes (see Figure 5.1) on the hill overlooking Akaroa Harbour was an issue that elicited particular response during the year. Typifying such concerns was a letter by Helen McFarlane published on 25 January entitled 'Little Boxes' (2002: 2):

Sir,

Having recently purchased a home in Akaroa we were most disturbed to see a group of what resembles large square toilet/ablution blocks being constructed on the hill directly above the village. The trees and bush which formed an attractive green backdrop to the town were removed, the clay exposed and then these hideous buildings have now emerged like a blot on the landscape.... You have to ask yourselves why tourists and others come to Akaroa, why do people buy property there, why are cruise ships coming in? Why are the roads full of day trippers from Christchurch? I would have thought it was because the Council and locals wanted to promote Akaroa as an attractive place to visit or live in with a supposedly French influence – obviously not.

Figure 5.1 New Architectural Buildings



Source: Author (2007).

Such tensions were also expressed in a letter entitled ‘Glasshouses’ (2002: 2) from Jackie Fields on 5 April:

Sir,

While looking after a B&B in Akaroa last weekend I, and two separate lots of guests from Akaroa, were horrified that the council has allowed the building of three glass monstrosities on the hill-side as you walk along Rue Jolie. What on earth is being allowed in Akaroa? For the Canadian guest to be disbelieving at these awful pieces of architecture in such a charming spot, left me not knowing what to say. I would have thought there were building restrictions in Akaroa to retain the charm.

Evident in such letters during the year was a sense of threat formed in relation to an ongoing battle over Akaroa’s place identity. The prevalence of such letters reflects the degree to which battles between competing factions over Akaroa’s built environment dominated people’s thinking.

While concerns over the modernisation of Akaroa's built environment elicited particular response during 2002, the dominance of local issues within public discourse became clearer as other issues arose. Another topic that drew frequent attention during the year was the negative effect of tourism on Akaroa's tranquil environment. One letter on 14 June headed 'The noise stops here' (2002: 2) from Jeremy Buchanan complained:

Sir,

Once Akaroa was known as a peaceful end-of-the-road stop with sights and sounds to soothe away the stresses of modern life. But as a resident for the last six years it is alarming to notice the increase in noise pollution, let alone to the changes in our landscape. As the town attracts more and more people our quality of life is jeopardized. Inevitably, there is more noise.

Rather than fearing the consequences of much broader global events, the problem identified in such letters was that an excess of tourists and holiday-makers in Akaroa was beginning to undermine one of the town's most cherished qualities, its tranquillity. As opposed to fearing high-consequence threats characteristic of late modernity, this suggests that the community members' concerns were firmly anchored in the local sphere. Contrary to the views of Beck and Giddens that the urgency generated within mainstream media debate filters down to the public, such letters in fact hint at a division between abstract political and media discussion and local discourse. This became further apparent as more letters were examined.

5.5.2. Akaroa Mail 2003

While 2002 experienced the media fallout from 9/11, 2003 in the mainstream media was the year of SARS (Wilson, Thomson and Mansoor, 2004). However, like 2002, a mark of the *Akaroa Mail* in 2003 was a level of discourse anchored within the local sphere and the absence of letters discussing global events. In the place of global issues, a dominant concern during the year involved the relatively mundane issue of a newly enforced parking limit. Exemplifying such concerns, a letter entitled 'Council questions' from Alan Nobb (2003: 2) on 27 June complained:

Sir,

It is crazy to expect people to come to Akaroa, park for two hours and then move on. Where are they going to move on to? A visitor would struggle to be able to eat lunch in that time and stroll the new expensive visitor-friendly development. Or is that the point so we can gain a little revenue and send them home with a nice friendly parking ticket?

The same concern was expressed in another letter on 19 September 2003 from Michael Tyldesley, headed 'Sander effects' (2003: 2):

Sir,

Assuming that everyone obeyed the time limit it would mean drivers searching for another two hour slot every two hours, reluctant to journey to the other end of town. This simply generates further traffic movements in an already congested town centre. It achieves nothing more than spent exhaust fumes and cars whizzing around the town searching for space. Frustrated drivers do not make good tourists. People do not come here for two hours, they come here for the day.

While only two letters are represented here, the parking issue was a dominant concern throughout 2003 and spurred heated debate. The issue at stake was that many felt that a parking limit would be counter-productive when the township was seeking to attract tourists, not send them away with a bad impression. Interestingly, while such letters exhibited concern for the health of Akaroa's tourist market, they also reflect a lack of concern that high-consequence threats such as terrorism or SARS could have a much greater effect.

While parking was a common concern in 2003, another issue frequently raised was that, owing to the high cost of living, Akaroa had simply become too expensive for people on a low income. Typical of such concerns was 'Peninsula future' from Frank Help (2003: 2) published on 3 October:

Sir,

According to the Local Government Act, it is stated that it is required of every council to promote good social, economic and cultural wellbeing in the best interests of its ratepayers. Bearing this in mind, I have a number of questions to put to our council. Is it in our best interest that you demand ever increasing rates and the proposed sale of our reserves to promote schemes such as the beach road development, the installation of water meters and the boat park etc., that in no way enhance the wellbeing of the local people? In fact these schemes are having the opposite effect. By using the rating system to finance these schemes it is having a direct effect on the cost of living in this town. Those on low incomes, such as wage earners with young families are forced to move to the city to survive. By this process, social activities diminish, school rolls collapse and the wellbeing of the community deteriorates.

Such letters were common in 2003 and show that, while Akaroa exists in a global risk environment, the township and its inhabitants were already experiencing a local-level crisis. Relating back to the proposition of this thesis, the prevalence of such letters in 2003 and the absence of those displaying concern for such threats as SARS, suggests that global risks are unlikely to register within public debates when other, more immediate issues require attention. As opposed to widespread apprehension caused by how information about global risks is made public, this again points to a disparity between the urgency generated in the mainstream media and the risk sentiments held by people at the local-level.

5.5.3. Akaroa Mail 2004

Following 2002 and 2003, letters to the editor in 2004 continued to centre on local issues, reflecting the ongoing absence of global risks within public discourse at the community level. Indeed, rather than exhibiting apprehension over the possibility of a global catastrophic event causing a tourism crisis, a dominant concern throughout 2004 involved the problems associated with a flourishing tourism market. A topic which attracted particular attention in this respect was that, owing to commercial tourist activity on Akaroa Harbour, Akaroa was beginning to lose its reputation as a restful place to both live and visit. Exemplifying such concerns was 'Skis threaten Akaroa' from Paul Coppersmith (2004: 6), published on 19 March:

Sir,

As a part-time resident of Akaroa since the mid-1990's – and the owner of a tour company that sends groups of American garden enthusiasts to Christchurch and the Banks Peninsula – I have a prediction – unless jet-skis are banned from Akaroa Harbour, this area will gradually lose its reputation as a peaceful, unspoiled place of exceptional beauty.

Despite expressing concern over the negative effects of commercial tourist activity, the significance of such letters in 2004 is that, by focusing on issues associated with tourism's presence, they reflect the absence of any urgent concern for the global risks associated with the tourism industry's possible decline. This suggests that the thought of New Zealand's tourist industry being itself at risk is not something that registers significantly within community members' thinking.

While the noise caused by jet-ski activity on Akaroa Harbour was one major issue in 2004, as with previous years, another topic that received attention was the loss of Akaroa's built heritage. This was evident with numerous residents expressing dismay over attempts to modernise various commercial areas of the township for the aesthetic benefit of tourists. With a project designed to re-fashion aspects of Akaroa's built environment alongside the waterfront taking place during the year, the *Akaroa Mail* was littered with angry letters in protest. Such feelings are summed up in a sarcastic letter headed 'Waterfront developments' from David Reynolds (2004: 2) on 31 December:

Sir,

The Banks Peninsula District Council is to be congratulated for its recently completed makeover of the water-front of the English end of town. I can't think of anything that would make me feel more at home as an (adopted) Aucklanders than this Jaffaesque piece of urban design. I can't wait to see what shabby pastiche will be served up to extinguish once and for all the charm of the French end of town, thankfully pretty intact but no doubt still at threat while the awfulisers still hold the purse strings.

Letters of this kind reflect both the dominance of battles over Akaroa's built environment in public debates and a lack of urgent concern that the lifeblood of

Akaroa, tourism, could at some point suffer a catastrophic decline. In the context of the risk debate, the prevalence of such letters throughout 2004 suggests that community issues continued to dominate local debates. Thus, while Beck and Giddens assume that media discussion about global risks filters into the minds of individuals at the local-level, such letters in 2004 show that community concerns tend to be framed around local issues. Despite the growing media publicity given to global risks, this continued into 2005.

5.5.4. Akaroa Mail 2005

Although such issues as bird flu and peak oil had started to become entrenched in mainstream media debate, local issues again dominated people's list of concerns in 2005. Generating heated discussion, the most topical issue throughout the year related to the proposed political merger between the Banks Peninsula District Council and the Christchurch City Council. With a referendum held at the end of the year to decide Banks Peninsula's political fate, various letters debated the advantages and disadvantages of amalgamation. Exemplifying the strong feelings that the issue evoked were two letters published towards the end of the year. The first, entitled 'Vote carefully' from Ian Waghorn (2005: 2), was published on 23 September:

Sir,

We of Banks Peninsula need to vote carefully on the benefits, if any, of the City Council's motives for taking us over. Firstly, the Lyttelton Port Company is in the Banks Peninsula District Area, not the city. Secondly, with only one City Councillor representing us, can we be sure of his/her intentions? Thirdly, what guarantee will they give us about road access and so forth? I am 74 years, a European/Maori direct descendant and the City running us was tried over 100 years ago and found to be wanting and false. Fourthly, who wants a repeat of cities thinking they came before rural?

The extent to which the amalgamation issue stirred emotion was further reflected by 'The spirit of Akaroa' from Annette May (2005: 2), which appeared in the *Akaroa Mail* on 18 November:

Sir,

Akaroa – you are unique and beautiful. More importantly you have ‘spirit of place’! Too many places with similar qualities have lost all of those features – all because of the ‘mighty dollar’, and so-called ‘progress’. Akaroa, I love you just the way you are. If you choose to join the big city council fat cats, they will imbue you with all their values, monetary and otherwise, and there will be no turning back. Please don’t sell your soul Akaroa.

While only two letters are represented here, what is noteworthy about their content is the feeling that an association with the city would corrupt the town’s uniqueness. Instead of dividing the town between those who hold business and lifestyle interests, the issue caused division between those who sought to preserve Akaroa’s autonomy and those who desired a solution to problems that the Banks Peninsula District Council alone struggled to solve. At a time when global risks such as avian influenza were becoming regular topics in the mainstream media, the prevalence of the amalgamation issue and the absence of broader concerns throughout 2004 suggests that global risks, despite their catastrophic potential, failed to register as everyday concerns.

5.5.5. Akaroa Mail 2006

While peak oil, terrorism, SARS and avian influenza all received widespread coverage in the mainstream media between 2002 and 2005, 2006 was significant in terms of the publicity given to climate change. As established in Chapter Four, following the release of *An Inconvenient Truth* in August 2006 and the *Stern Review* later the same year, the media hype surrounding climate change intensified. The issue gained even more attention once the media picked up on Stern’s assertion that one of the major contributors of climate change is the carbon output of international aviation, sparking speculation as to the long-term sustainability of long-haul air travel. Despite this, the climate change issue was largely ignored in local debates, with dominant themes again being the loss of Akaroa’s built heritage and the development of new commercial attractions for tourists. This reflects the continuing importance of local issues in the public mind. However, following the release of *An Inconvenient Truth*, climate change was an issue that did register for some, with one member of the community feeling sufficiently moved to write twice on the topic. However, this was not in relation to how Akaroa may be affected, but in connection to how community

members could themselves act to help counter climate change. The first letter raised the issue in relation to the hot pools proposal (discussed in Chapter Three), voicing concern that the diesel boilers that would be used to heat the pools would generate vast quantities of carbon dioxide and thus contribute to the climate change problem. Referring to *An Inconvenient Truth* as a wake up call to the climate change issue, Annelias Pekelharing's first letter, 'In the deep end' (2006: 2), on 6 October complained:

Sir,

I could not believe my eyes – resource consents have been applied for to build hot pools in Akaroa. Akaroa has not even got a natural geo-thermal energy source! My question is, why do we keep on planning and creating in ways that should be obsolete by now? Mr Paul Sault, the developer, plans to use diesel-fired boilers. Any spills of diesel will create a serious hazard for the marine environment. Diesel is a resource that is finite, and the burning of it creates pollution (CO₂). To keep the water at a temperature of 36 to 41 degrees is going to guzzle the diesel in a big way. Are the residents of Akaroa supposed to put up with diesel exhaust emissions so that tourists can have a one hour soak in the pools and then bugger off again? And what about the bigger picture? Seeing the movie "An Inconvenient Truth" must leave even the most non-environmentally aware person a bit shaky. Al Gore, who missed becoming president of the US by a narrow margin, has not been twiddling his thumbs since then. The message he brings the world through this film is thoroughly researched and backed up by scientists worldwide – carbon dioxide is increasing in the atmosphere in quantities that never occurred before in the history of the planet. And this increase coincides with the period of industrialisation in the West. The film leaves us in no doubt as to the fact that humankind is directly responsible for the present global warming and melting of the polar ice. In this scenario the Netherlands will be under water in 50 to 100 years. We may not be able to reverse the trend. What we can do is confront the huge challenges we face to use more environment-friendly energy, like solar heating and wind power. Most disturbing I find that there is not even any mention of that. All we hear is how many thousands of people are going to come to Akaroa in their CO₂ spouting cars, and how keen the business community is to see the project go ahead. I urge the people of Banks Peninsula to ask ECan⁴² not to give their consent to this project.

Four weeks later on 3 November, Annelias Pekelharing voiced further concern in a letter entitled 'Lack of water gives pool idea' (2006: 2), suggesting ways in which

⁴² Ecan, or "Environment Canterbury", is name used by the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury, 2007).

residents could help tackle the climate change problem through a car pool system. She wrote:

Sir,

My 1987 model Toyota Corolla is lying in wait for the scrap heap. My fault, as I did not think of checking the water level after returning from Holland. It was dry! The car was a precious gift from a dear friend who died of cancer 4 years ago, which adds to my guilt feelings. The good news is that I have been getting rides in with friends (paying for petrol of course), as well as using my bike in town. I put my bike on the back of the car, and it's amazing how quickly I cycle from A to B once there. Sometimes I hop on a bus, bus timetables have improved a lot as well. Petrol costs will only go up, and the need to cut down on carbon dioxide will become more urgent.... Carpooling is an excellent way to do our bit to slow down global warming, as well as saving on car expenditure.

Despite climate change receiving some attention in the *Akaroa Mail*, it is telling that only one person felt compelled to write about the issue. This suggests that while global risks do register in the minds of some, few in Akaroa feel moved to the point where they feel the need to express their feelings publicly. In addition, while these letters display an awareness of global issues, they offer no evidence to suggest that their author feels at risk herself. This is pertinent for it shows that an awareness of global risks does not necessarily lead to a sense of being *at risk*.

5.5.6. Akaroa Mail 2007

Ending the content analysis of the *Akaroa Mail* with letters published in May 2007, issues that were raised again reflected common themes. This is significant as by early 2007 media coverage given to global risks appeared to have reached a peak, with the threat climate change poses to tourism and travel becoming particularly established in mainstream media debates. Indeed, rather than fearing the potential consequences of climate change and other global problems, letters again focused on local issues, further suggesting that global-level risks fail to register as everyday concerns. With the township beginning to lose locals amid a shortage of affordable housing, the mood reflected in letters to the editor was that Akaroa, as a community, was already going into decline. Summing up such sentiments on 26 January was 'Home sweet home?' from Chris and Glenda James (2007: 2):

Sir,

It is with more than a passing interest that I see that the population of the Akaroa area has declined by 11% despite the Christchurch area rising 10%. And it is of no surprise to find that only 60% of houses in Akaroa are owned by people actually living here. This is a worldwide problem as desirable seaside and rural properties are purchased as holiday homes, pushing up real estate values and decimating communities. New Zealanders will waffle on about foreign ownership but kiwis are grabbing as much coastal property as they can get also. Aggressive market tactics by some real estate agents in targeting homeowners who had no thoughts of selling have not helped and I have seen no decline in the real estate agent population. Much of the usual rental houses have been sold and with almost the highest price averages pushing home ownership well out of reach of those with modest incomes and increases local families need for good affordable rental property. Just because a real estate agent says you can get a certain amount of rent because of demand, it does not mean you should and then wonder why nobody wants to rent your house or rents only short term. This creates a feeling of resentment and ill-will amongst all parties involved instead of mutual benefit.

Another such letter, headed 'Affordable housing in Akaroa', from Patsy Turner (2007: 2), was published on 9 February 2007:

Sir,

The housing crisis has led to negativity against bach owners who come here occasionally to play, and apart from keeping the gift shops and restaurants thriving, are not contributing to the life of our community. It is the people who live and work here that give this place its heart. They are the committee members and volunteers who run the non profit organisations, and the families whose children attend local schools.... Accommodation for local people is the problem. I can think of a dozen families who have been here for decades and are now hanging on by the skin of their teeth. These are people who are creative, hardworking, honest and involved. What do we want? Big spenders, or an alive community?

As such letters show, while Akaroa's reliance on tourism renders it susceptible to unpredictable global events, problems associated with housing means that the township is already facing a crisis of its own. While Akaroa's security relies significantly on events that lie outside its immediate vicinity, the housing issue is already causing immense difficulties within the township itself. This is an issue that continues to beleaguer Akaroa and, clearly for some, equates to the slow and

agonising destruction of the community. Moreover, as opposed to global risks that seem to loom in the distance, the problem is an immediate one for many within the community because it is an issue that is currently affecting their lives. Given the prevalence of this topic at the level of public discussion, Akaroa's housing crisis clearly masks any concerns about such threats as climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza becoming manifest.

5.6. Discussion

The content analysis of letters published in the *Akaroa Mail* offers a number of insights into the types of issues that cause concern within Akaroa. To begin, although the analysis was conducted during a period in which terrorism, SARS, avian influenza, oil market instability and climate change all received attention within the mainstream media, a noticeable feature of the *Akaroa Mail* was the general absence of discussion about such issues. This suggests that, while global risks are a central topic of concern within the realm of politics and the general media, an entirely different level of discourse exists within the local domain. This points to a divide between abstracted political and media debate about future possible scenarios, and the realities of everyday life. A second point to be made from the analysis conducted is that many of Akaroa's inhabitants appear to already face serious local-level issues of their own, which likely distracts their attention away from scenario thinking about global risks. This is evident with numerous letters complaining about the stresses caused by commercial development, noise pollution and the ongoing housing crisis (amongst others). While such issues are relatively minor compared to the potential consequences of a global catastrophe, they are problems which have a tangible presence in community life. Consequently, while Akaroa's inhabitants find themselves encased in a global climate of threat, public discourse at the community level appears to centre mainly on local issues. As with the material drawn from the interview process, this supports the view that the urgency generated in political and mainstream media debate about global risks generally fails to affect a sense of ontological security at the everyday level.

5.7. Conclusion

While Chapter Five is unable to draw definite conclusions, the evidence obtained during the research process lends support to the view that the threat presented by

global risks, although a topic prevalent in media debates, generally fails to infiltrate the realm of everyday life in Akaroa. While Beck and Giddens assume a connection between media discussion of global risks and the fears of lay people, the evidence presented in this chapter in fact points to the existence of two predominantly separate levels of risk discourse. As shown through interviews with community members and as observed in letters to the editor, the issues that were most commonly identified related to local problems, involving such matters as the loss of Akaroa's peaceful charm, the strain caused by residential development and the modernisation of the town's built environment. This suggests that, while the media act to convey information about global risks from "experts" to the public, community members remain focused on local issues. Contrary to Beck and Giddens, this implies that an awareness of global risks does not necessarily translate into a fear of their consequences. Although one interview participant bucked this trend, his fear of terrorism and bird flu, by his own admission, most likely stemmed from his military background, making him uniquely inclined to think about the threats global risks pose. Furthermore, although another member of the community wrote twice to the *Akaroa Mail* in late 2006 detailing her concerns about climate change, her letters focused on the need for people in the community to act with greater environmental awareness and gave no indication of feeling directly at threat herself.

A second point to be drawn out of the research process relates to lay people's trust in the ability of institutions charged with the responsibility of managing risk. In the risk society literature, Beck and Giddens make the point that one of the consequences of the media's role in the transmission of risk awareness is that the public begin to lose faith in the ability of experts to actively deal with risks. This, they claim, contributes to an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty which is a mark of the current age. Contrary to this however, a characteristic of a number of interviewees' responses and letters to the editor was not only an absence of debate about global risks, but a general faith in those whose who are allocated responsibility for managing risk. On one hand, this was apparent in the responses of two interviewees who openly stated that they viewed global risks as non-issues either because they felt that the UNWTO and the Government held responsibility for managing such problems, or because the Ministry of Tourism's forecasts show that visitor numbers will continue to rise. On the other, such faith was implicit in many people's comments, with a number of interviewees

and letter writers identifying issues, such as the loss of Akaroa's tranquillity, associated with tourism's presence rather than its decline. Considering that a sudden drop in visitor numbers would have significant repercussions for the community, this hints at an unquestioned trust in the institutions that govern tourism and at an underlying confidence in the normalcy of everyday life. This supports the view that, despite the global climate of threat in which Akaroa is surrounded and the media's role in disseminating risk information, community members' sense of ontological security remains unaffected.

6. Conclusion

6.1. A Review

6.1.1. The Debate

This thesis has been about global catastrophic risks and the conscious effect of such risks at the level of everyday life. Utilising R. D. Laing's concept of "ontological security", this thesis questioned the extent to which risks that loom in the global environment cause a sense of ontological *insecurity* amongst individuals in their day-to-day existence. In addressing this topic, this thesis sought to offer an empirical response to two different approaches in the risk literature. On one side of the debate, the "risk society" perspective held by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens maintains that the contemporary age of reflexive modernity is marked by both the emergence of global risks that exist as the unintended consequences of modernisation and a greater sense of risk amongst the public. This, they claim, is due to the media's influence in disseminating risk information and a weakening faith amongst lay individuals in the ability of experts to manage risk. The risk society view therefore paints lay individuals as aware of global risks and fearful of their effects. Contradicting this however, the "socio-cultural" perspective held by Mary Douglas and Deborah Lupton maintains that the perception of risk is determined not by a risk's intensity or scale, but by which events individuals *identify* as threatening. Risks, according to this position, are thus socially formed, as individuals have a tendency to highlight certain events as risks while downplaying others. Because global risks mainly exist in an abstracted form and rarely manifest themselves within people's lifetimes, this raises doubt as to whether such risks would be identified as priority issues. Rather than installing a sense of fear as Beck and Giddens suggest, on the basis of Douglas' and Lupton's assertions, this thesis asked whether global risks may in fact be deemed peripheral at the level of everyday life in light of the immediacy apparent in local-level issues which require more urgent consideration.

Seeking to ground the risk literature from the level of theoretical abstraction to that of lived experience, this thesis explored the risk debate in relation to New Zealand's economic dependence on tourism. Despite New Zealand being traditionally viewed as

removed from turbulent global events owing to its geographical isolation, in the contemporary era a broader paradigm exists in which all locales, however remote, are susceptible to external forces. This renders individuals subject not only to events within their local settings, but also to threats that emerge from afar. In the context of the risk society, the thesis has argued that this local/global relationship applies to the connection that exists between New Zealand and the wider world through the tourism industry. Given that New Zealand's geographical isolation renders it dependent on air links with the rest of the world, any global event that undermines international travel has the potential to inflict severe economic damage on areas dependent on international markets. Moreover, as with climate change, peak oil and avian influenza, global risks also have the potential to affect tourism from within New Zealand itself. Given the unpredictable nature of risks in late modernity, as witnessed with 9/11 and SARS, this suggests that the outlook for tourist-dependent areas in New Zealand is uncertain. Because of the extensive media coverage given to how global risks may affect New Zealand tourism in the future, this makes the risk debate particularly relevant to how people who depend on tourism perceive risk in their daily lives. Accordingly, this thesis focused on how risk is perceived in the context of the tourist-dependent community of Akaroa as a case study site.

6.1.2. Akaroa and the Global Risk Environment

Following an outline of the risk debate in Chapter Two, Chapter Three began the process of placing the debate in context by profiling Akaroa as a tourist-dependent community beset with internal problems and inter-group tensions. The first point of significance drawn in the chapter was that Akaroa is one of various areas in New Zealand that turned to tourism following the economic reforms instigated by the Fourth Labour Government in the 1980s, which saw primary production go into decline nationwide. Such was the extent of Akaroa's transition from agriculture to tourism, Chapter Three established that its economy now relies almost entirely on the visitor market, with tourism accounting directly for 50 per cent of the township's working population and, indirectly, for many more. Secondly, Chapter Three also established that Akaroa is a place that has come to rely significantly on the high-risk international tourist market. This suggests that the township and its inhabitants would suffer greatly in the wake of a tourism crisis. While the first half of Chapter Three

discussed Akaroa's dependence on tourism, the second examined its various social groups and conflicting interests, thus presenting Akaroa as a place not only susceptible to external forces, but where a sense of threat is socially constructed amid a web of localised tensions. In addition, Chapter Three also explored the impact of infrastructure upgrading and residential development on the cost of living, which were shown to be underlying factors causing the township's residential population to go into decline. Chapter Three thus outlined Akaroa's economic fragility and showed it to be a place facing a number of local issues.

While Chapter Three studied Akaroa's tourism-dependence and social make-up to form an understanding of the various local issues that confront community members and to illustrate the township's vulnerability in the event of a tourism crisis, Chapter Four examined the kinds of global-level risks that could affect Akaroa in the future. Thus, while Chapter Three focused on Akaroa as a self-enclosed and geographically situated unit of social and economic commerce, Chapter Four examined Akaroa's place in the global risk environment, where all locales are subject to threat. The objective here was to show that, while Akaroa is spatially defined, its security in fact relies significantly on events that lie beyond its immediate vicinity. These are threats which are invisible to daily life and exist for community members in an abstracted form. To illustrate this point, four global risks to tourism were examined that fit within the risk society framework: climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza. On their own, each was shown to cast uncertainty over the future prospects of tourist-dependent areas. Collectively, however, they were shown to constitute a global climate of threat within which Akaroa and its inhabitants are vulnerable. Alongside Chapter Three, Chapter Four thus helped to present Akaroa not only as a place prone to internalised conflicts, tensions and power struggles, but as a place susceptible to more devastating, globally emerging threats. The point of Chapter Five, the empirical component of the study, was to gauge whether global or more tangible, local issues bore most on community members' thinking.

6.2. Findings

6.2.1. A Summary

Using Akaroa as a case study site provided a number of observations about how perceptions of risk are formed at the level of everyday life. Having established that Akaroa is subject to various high-consequence risks that both transcend spatial division and have received extensive media attention, the top-down approach of Beck and Giddens would assume that a sense of apprehension and uncertainty would be pervasive. However, after interviewing members of the community and following a content analysis of letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail*, a sense of threat in Akaroa appears to be constructed instead almost entirely around localised tensions and ongoing battles for power. Global risks, on the other hand, whether in the form of climate change, peak oil or any other form of threat, appear to be largely ignored. This suggests that, despite the catastrophic potential of global risks and the publicity given to them, the attention of many in the community is turned *inwards*, towards local-level affairs. This was clear with interviewees and letters to the editor commonly raising such issues as the rising cost of living, the township's declining population and the loss of Akaroa's built heritage (amongst others). This suggests that, despite the global climate of risk and uncertainty in which Akaroa is enveloped, global risks are generally screened from community members' attention. It also suggests that global risks, despite their vast and potent nature, are too far removed from the realities of everyday life to generate a sense of urgency.

While the majority of interviewees and letters to the editor gave no evidence of being concerned at the thought of a global catastrophic event, there were of course some exceptions. The first was an accommodation provider named "Chris", who voiced particular concern for the threats presented by terrorism and avian influenza. Contrary to others in the community who were primarily concerned about local issues, Chris appeared highly conscious of global risks and genuinely concerned at the thought of their affects. However, by his own admission, this appeared to be more the result of his twenty-two years of military experience than the extent to which such risks had been publicised. Thus, rather than being influenced by the sheer scale of global risks and the ways in which they are represented in the mainstream media, it appeared that

Chris's selection of terrorism and avian influenza as concerns stemmed from his unique social background. The second member of the community to highlight global risks was Annelias Pekelharing who wrote two letters to the *Akaroa Mail* in late 2006 concerning climate change. However, rather than expressing concern that Akaroa was at risk, her letters focused on how people could act with greater environmental awareness at the local-level. Thus, while her reference to *An Inconvenient Truth* suggests that she was influenced by the media's representation of climate change, she in fact gave no indication that she felt at risk herself. This suggests that an awareness of global risks does not necessarily translate into a sense of being *at risk*.

6.2.2. Critical Reflections

The findings of this research offer a number of insights into the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two opposing positions in the risk literature in relation to how the threat presented by global risks affects a sense of ontological security. Dealing with the risk society literature first, on the basis of some participant's responses, Beck's and Giddens' claims about lay individuals being mistrusting of experts charged with the role of managing risk appear slightly exaggerated. Beck and Giddens each posit that not only has the late modern age become characterised by risks that transcend spatial division, lay individuals have also lost faith in those whose role involves the responsibility of risk prevention. This, they claim, is due to the media's influence in creating a risk conscious public who have come to understand that global risks are beyond expert control. However, evident in the responses of numerous interviewees and letters to the editor was not only the absence of fear concerning global issues, but a general faith in those responsible for managing risk. In some cases this was stated openly, with two interviewees declaring global risks to be a non-issue either because the UNWTO and the New Zealand Government are allocated the task for managing such problems, or because tourism forecasts show that visitor numbers will continue to rise. However, in most other cases such faith appeared to underlie people's responses, with many in the community identifying issues associated with tourism's presence rather than its decline. This suggests that the ability of such organisations as the Ministry of Tourism and the UNWTO to manage global risks is not something that readily enters into community members' thinking. On this basis, while Beck and Giddens paint lay individuals as not only fearful of global risks, but also as lacking

faith in the ability of experts who deal with them, evidence suggests that such faith (whether it be self-aware or sub-conscious) as it relates to the institutions that manage tourism in fact pervades community life.

While the faith held by community members in institutions that govern tourism appears to contradict Beck's and Giddens' risk society approach, a further shortcoming of their perspective is that it fails to grasp how life is experienced at the street-level. Taking a macro-sociological approach, Beck and Giddens provide an account of how modernity has become undermined by the products of its own making; however, by setting their focus at such a broad level, they fail to acknowledge how risk is experienced day-to-day. Significant here is that, while global risks are spoken about at length within the realm of political, academic and media debate, the local-level is a completely different arena. Thus, while focusing on the "objectivity" of the types of risks that characterise reflexive modernity, Beck and Giddens neglect to account for how life is experienced *subjectively*, at the level of localised experience. As witnessed in Akaroa, while such global risks as climate change, peak oil, terrorism and avian influenza have received extensive attention at the level of political, academic and media discussion, they seldom register locally. Instead, community members appeared more focused on issues relating to their personal set of circumstances within the confines of community life. Rather than being struck by a sense of apprehension owing to the influence of the media in conveying risk information to the public, this supports the view that the urgency prevalent at the institutional level fails to filter down to that of the everyday.

Understanding the limitations of the risk society perspective in matters of risk perception helps to identify precisely where the strengths and weaknesses of Douglas' and Lupton's socio-cultural approach lie. Taking a bottom-up perspective, although Douglas and Lupton offer no explanation as to how global risks have come to emerge (which is their shortcoming), by suggesting that perceptions of risk are socially formed, they provide an account for the different ways in which risks are identified and judged. While this offers no understanding of the catastrophic nature of reflexive modernity, it does give an explanation for why some events are identified as risks while others are overlooked. Thus, while Beck's and Giddens' macro-sociological approach explains how the global risk environment has emerged, Douglas' and

Lupton's micro-sociological approach, in the case of Akaroa, appears to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how perceptions of risk are formed within it.

6.3. Implications for Tourism and Recommendations for Future Research

6.3.1. Preparing for a Tourism Crisis

As Akaroa experienced with the 1973 and 1979 oil shocks and Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973, New Zealand's geographical isolation offers no immunity from global events. As this thesis has set out however, following New Zealand's shift towards tourism as a catalyst for economic growth in the 1980s, the township is more vulnerable now than ever before. Although this thesis has focused solely on Akaroa as an area susceptible to events which threaten global tourism flows, the township is in fact only one of many areas in New Zealand that have developed a dependency on tourist markets.⁴³ The implication of this is that, were Akaroa to experience a substantial visitor decline owing to the effects of climate change, peak oil or another global event, other population centres in New Zealand would also suffer. This means that a visitor decline in Akaroa would merely be symptomatic of a much larger tourism crisis. However, if the finding of the thesis that people have a general tendency to ignore global risks and maintain faith in the normalcy of daily existence is applicable outside of Akaroa, then people in tourist-dependent areas throughout New Zealand could possibly be caught unsuspecting and unprepared in the wake of a major global event. Thus, were a global avian influenza pandemic to suddenly stem the flow of tourists to New Zealand's shores or a global oil crisis to spell the abrupt end of mass tourism for instance, it is possible that tourist-dependent communities in New Zealand would struggle to adapt. This compounds their vulnerability.

6.3.2. Future Directions

Recognising that Akaroa faces a number of global risks and that its inhabitants appear generally indifferent to the possibility of such risks becoming manifest, it is clear that the township and its inhabitants are both exposed to and possibly unprepared for a large-scale tourism crisis. Despite such susceptibility, aside from Becken's study into

⁴³ Such areas include Queentown, Kaikoura, Rotorua and Coromandel.

peak oil, research involving the risks associated with tourism in New Zealand has until now focused mainly on the social, environmental and economic impacts of visitor growth.⁴⁴ While such research is important owing to tourism's various negative affects, it is focused solely on the unintended consequences of tourism's presence. However, because various risks characteristic of reflexive modernity threaten tourism, New Zealand is subject to a new type of risk, one that involves the possibility of a substantial visitor *decline*. Because international tourism currently serves as New Zealand's primary earner of foreign exchange and is a vital contributor to the economic stability of many small communities and towns, such a scenario could have a devastating affect in many areas. Consequentially, while forecasts for tourism growth suggest that tourist-dependent townships like Akaroa will continue to prosper, the future of such areas in New Zealand is in fact highly uncertain. Recognising this, precautionary research is needed to forecast the potential affects of a tourism crisis and how these can be both mitigated and managed in tourist-dependent areas.

⁴⁴ Evidence for this claim can be found by checking the publication list on Lincoln University's Tourism Recreation Research and Education Centre (TRREC) website (<http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/story/9485.html?>), and by conducting a publication search though the Ministry of Tourism's Research website (<http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz>).

7. Appendix: An Evaluation

Restrictions

This thesis encountered a number of issues that affected its scope and efficiency. First, as this thesis was based on the premise that Akaroa is a place prone to global risks largely owing to its reliance on the international visitor market, up-to-date data was needed to show the extent to which this sector contributes to the local economy. However, such evidence was not forthcoming. Aside from an attempt by Butcher *et al.* (2003) to estimate the size and economic significance of Akaroa's international and domestic visitor markets in the year to January 2003, no current data exists. This is because, as a demographic unit, Akaroa is too small to register within the datasets held by the Ministry of Tourism. For this reason, the thesis had to rely on Butcher *et al.*'s approximations and anecdotal evidence obtained during discussions with business owners and managers. Consequently, although this thesis rests on the view that Akaroa is highly susceptible to global risks, more recent information regarding its tourist markets would have helped to establish a more precise account of its vulnerability.

While this thesis struggled to find up-to-date information detailing the economic significance of Akaroa's visitor markets, an additional problem was the difficulty experienced in recruiting research participants. The initial aim for this study was to recruit between twenty and thirty participants representing Akaroa's different social groups. However, despite contacting community members and various key stakeholders by phone, email or through door-knocking, many declined to take part. This restricted the number of participants involved to thirteen.⁴⁵ While a number of these were people who held positions representing different groups and interests in the community (and thus were able to provide insight into the issues concerning the community as a whole), this study would have benefited from a more substantial participant base. Consequently, the thesis can only claim to have a partial understanding of the types of risks of most concern to people within the community.

⁴⁵ The reason for such unwillingness is difficult to gauge; however, it is suspected that, given the amount of research previously conducted in Akaroa, the community's tolerance for people doing research in the area has reached saturation point.

Practising Reflexivity: A Personal Critique

Reflecting on the research process and how the findings of the thesis were presented, a number of issues require attention which relate to Chapter Five. Building on the earlier chapters, the aim of Chapter Five was to take the topic of the thesis beyond the realm of theory by offering an empirically-based examination of what those with a stake in Akaroa fear the most. On this basis, Chapter Five comprised the most pivotal component of the thesis because it provided the content on which conclusions were drawn. However, problems were faced with how this content was presented. The intention in constructing the chapter was to present interviewees' responses to the question of what risks they feel are most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general, followed by an analysis of letters to the editor in the *Akaroa Mail* to substantiate interview findings. However, upon conducting interviews and completing a content analysis of letters to the editor, I found myself with a wealth of fragmented information owing to the many different issues that were identified. As a result, I found it difficult to tie different links together in order to create a sense of fluency. While this presented some challenges in forming an analysis of my interview findings, it caused considerable difficulties when developing a content analysis of letters published in the *Akaroa Mail*. Because letters published in the *Akaroa Mail* between 2002 and 2007 touched upon such diverse topics, problems were encountered when trying to summarise their content yet present a comprehensive account of the types of issues that circulate in public discourse.

Considering the difficulties encountered with Chapter Five, another point that requires discussion is how the thesis could have been approached differently. Wanting to offer an empirical approach to the risk literature, my aim was to establish the extent to which the threat presented by global risks affects individuals on a day-to-day basis. While information about what community members' fear was abundant, the problem encountered was that the repeated identification of local issues by community members in interviews and in letters to the editor merely reflected the general absence of global risks in people's list of concerns rather than a comprehensive account of how they rationalise about them. Consequently, my research left me with more information about community members' local-level problems than was perhaps needed. This made it difficult to assign value to each piece of information without

often repeating many of the same points in my analysis. If the thesis was approached differently, rather than asking interviewees in general terms what risks they felt were most threatening to their future in Akaroa and to Akaroa in general, a more effective method may have been to ask them directly whether local or global issues concerned them most on a day-to-day basis. To gauge how they rationalise about such issues, an equally beneficial question would have been to ask why.

Meeting Research Objectives

The final and perhaps most important point for discussion is whether the objectives of this thesis have been met. Recognising that both the risk society and socio-cultural perspectives remain largely theoretical and offer little real insight into how risk is perceived at the level of everyday life, the aim was to follow the work of Deborah Lupton by offering an empirically-grounded approach to the existing discussions. In doing so, the primary objective was to take the risk literature beyond the realm of theory to explore how lay individuals perceive risk within the context of a tourist-dependent community. Although the thesis encountered difficulties with recruiting participants, by talking to community members and through conducting a content analysis of letters to the editor published in the *Akaroa Mail*, this goal was largely achieved. The drawback, however, was that a lack of participants meant that a more comprehensive study was not possible.

While the thesis met its first aim by offering an empirical study of how perceptions of risk are formed in Akaroa, the accomplishment of its second aim, to lay the groundwork for research on the risks associated with a tourism crisis, lies beyond the thesis itself. To this date, few studies have examined the possible implications of a substantial visitor decline in New Zealand. Indeed, aside from Becken's *Managing tourism in the face of peak oil* (2007), a tourism crisis in New Zealand owing to an unforeseen global event is an area that remains largely unexplored. Recognising this, while the thesis looked to offer an empirical approach to the risk literature, it also aimed to form a basis for further research in this area. By showing that people in Akaroa have a general tendency to ignore global risks in favour of local issues, the township (and other tourist-dependent areas in New Zealand) may be caught unprepared in the wake of a major global threat becoming manifest. Considering that little research outside of Becken's study on peak oil has been undertaken on how the

affects of a tourism crisis could be managed, this suggests that the inhabitants of tourist-dependent areas in New Zealand are highly vulnerable. On this basis, the second aim of this study was to act as a foundation for further research on the affects of a major tourism crisis and how they can be mitigated and managed. However, the fulfilment of this aim rests on future work in this area.

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